Welfare Considerations for Supervisors Managing Child Sexual Abuse On-line Units.

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Abstract.

This qualitative study considered the possible emotional impact on twelve supervisors either working within, or responsible for, units viewing on-line child sexual abuse images.

Participants were interviewed using a semi structured interview guide. This was designed to explore specific welfare issues for supervisors and managers of child sex abuse on-line units, including factors that may be considered possible causes of occupational stress within this environment. The data was analysed by using a thematic analytical approach. Eighteen main themes were identified from the analysis with the following six themes explored in further depth. Definition of Images; Emotional Wellbeing; Sexual behaviour; Work Environment; Diversity; and Management:

The analysis suggests that occupational stressors such as poor management, staff resourcing, and work overload are significant issues for staff. While some staff indicated that they had developed coping strategies for compassion fatigue type stressors, it was identified that issues relating to the working environment, and concerns relating to the possible impact of viewing child sexual abuse images on sexual behaviour, or family relationships, may also be significant.

The conclusions from this study suggest that senior managers may wish to consider strategies such as the implementation of a welfare monitoring process for all staff viewing child sexual abuse on-line and clear guidelines on welfare provision, combined with supportive training for supervisors aimed at providing awareness of potential welfare issues amongst staff. A review of the resourcing and staffing of units is also suggested, together with training for senior management, aimed at heightening awareness and understanding of the role performed by staff working in this area.

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1. Introduction

In 1999 the President of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela, stated that:

"Our children are our most treasured asset. They are not ours to be used and abused - but to be loved and nurtured. Child sex abuse is an abuse of power. It is not limited by race, ethnicity or economic boundaries. I urge you to open your hearts, minds and ears to the cries of our abused and exploited children".
(Cited in Long and McLachlan, 2003, p. 277).

The sexual abuse of children is not a new phenomenon, although awareness and recognition of this as a major social issue has grown significantly during the past two decades. However the emergence of the Internet has had a significant impact on many aspects of this crime, in particular in relation to access and distribution of the actual images of abuse (Taylor and Quayle, 2003).

Responding to the specific issue of child sexual abuse and the Internet in the UK requires teams of specialist staff working in specialist units. One role of such units is to identify and when possible, locate the children seen in the images. To achieve this, staff will be required to view and, on occasions listen, to images of children being abused.

For some staff, this may require regular viewing of sexual abusive images, often on a daily basis. Given that the role of investigators viewing child abuse images will include a requirement to establish the exact nature of the sexual act, estimate the age of the child, and compare the image of the child(ren) involved, to previous images, this may involve viewing images for the majority of a shift of eight or more hours.

While the majority of staff working in this area will be from a law enforcement background (Toch, 2002), civilian staff either working in a support capacity such as administration or translation, or those with specialist skills such as computer forensics may also inadvertently, or through their role, be exposed to images of child sexual abuse, (Stevenson, 2002).

While many staff working in this area will have volunteered for this role, a study by Stevenson (2002, p15) found that up to 35% of staff working in units viewing child abuse images had not volunteered, as the following statement from Stevenson's study explained:

"Officers are currently posted without choice ……..there is inadequate back-up by senior officers and it is difficult to get posted out of the unit".

60% of those taking part in Stevenson's study also indicated that they were not adequately briefed about their role, or the images they might see. As one officer explained:

"Some (police) roles have changed, and people have to view images they weren't originally required to. It is (just) assumed officers should be able to handle anything……" (Stevenson, 2002, p15).

While there appear to have been few studies into the health or psychological effects on those working in 'on-line' investigation of child sexual abuse, there are several relevant studies which have considered the occupational stress of law enforcement officers working in potentially emotional or traumatic environments. (e.g. Anderson, *et al* 1995), while a study by Liberman, *et al*, (2002) advised that occupational stress appeared to be a significant risk factor for psychological distress among police officers in the US, and may also be a strong predictor of post traumatic stress symptoms.

Given the subject matter of this research, it is also important to understand the complex issues surrounding the actual abuse of children, and again, there have been several studies in this area. Understandably, many studies have focused on the most appropriate way of supporting the victims following abuse (e.g. Weiner and Kurpius, 1995). Meanwhile other studies have considered the most effective manner of investigating the crime from the perspective of the agencies involved, such as the study carried out by Conroy, *et al* (1990), which considered the ways in which different agencies may be required to work together, and the difficulties that may arise from this.

Until recently, very few studies had considered the relatively new, but increasingly related, issue of paedophilia on the Internet, however this is now changing, particularly in relation to studies which focus on understanding the offender, and their behaviour (Taylor and Quayle, 2003).

As previously discussed there appears to be little research or information available which considers the wellbeing of those who view distressing images of child abuse as part of their job, therefore the literature to support this study now considers, in depth, the following areas:

- The abuse of children, and the increase of Internet use in paedophilia.
- Occupational stress within emotionally traumatic areas of work.

1.1. The abuse of children and the increase of Internet use in paedophilia

The sexual abuse of children has several legal and moral complexities, which can cause difficulties in defining what is meant when using the term 'child abuse'. An illustration of this can be seen in the definition of the word 'child', for the age at which a child becomes an adult, will have different interpretations depending on their country of residence and, as will be discussed, there are similar problems in defining the term 'sexual abuse' particularly in relation to images of sexual abuse.

1.1.1. Relevant Definitions

A review by Silverman (2002, p13) examined the difficulties and frustration of defining sexual offences. These were summed up in a statement by the former UK Minister of State, Paul Boateng:

> "The law on sexual offences is confused and confusing (...) and has many anomalies that need resolving".

In the case of child sexual abuse this was partly rectified in 2003, with the passing of the current legislation within the United Kingdom (UK) which makes it an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, for an adult to have sex with anyone, male or

female, under the age of sixteen. Similar legislation has also been passed in the United States making it a federal offence for an adult to have sex with anyone under the age of eighteen (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006).

While the UK Sexual Offences Act 2003 is helpful in clarifying this situation, concerns regarding legislation and child sexual abuse remain. For example, Silverman (2002) pointed to the debate by West (1987, as cited in Silverman, 2002) who identified that should two children both under the age of sixteen indulge in 'sexual petting', each are guilty of assault on the other, a situation which West suggested could be viewed as 'legal overkill'(p.17).

Although those issues remain under debate, for the purpose of this study, a recognised definition relating to child abuse within the UK is set out below:

> "The involvement of dependant, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate family roles"
>
> (DHSS and Welsh Office, 1988: p 26) (as cited in Conroy *et al,* 1990: p 10).

Of equal importance for those working in this area is some form of framework upon which to categorise both the offender, and the crime. An acknowledged definition of paedophilia is 'sexual perversion in which children are the preferred sexual object' with those individuals who have a sexual interest in children categorised as paedophiles **(**Merriam-Webster, 2002), and both the definitions, and the impact they have within the law, are discussed in detail by McLachlan (2003). The definition of hebaphilia, a term not so well known within society, is 'having a sexual interest in adolescent's post-puberty, but usually under the age of eighteen' (Powell, 2007; Urban Dictionary, 1999).

As previously indicated, equally problematic is the definition of what actually constitutes a child sexual abuse image. To better describe the types of images that may be found, the table outlined in Calder (2004) has been reproduced here (with the permission of the author, Ms Quale):

Table 1. Description of level of child abuse images.

Level	Name	Description of picture qualities
1	Indicative	Non erotic/non sexualised. Showing children in underwear/ swimming costumes, taken from commercial sources or family albums; in which the context or organisation of pictures by the collector indicates inappropriateness
2	Nudist	Pictures of naked/semi-naked children in appropriate nudist settings, and from legitimate settings
3	Erotica	Surreptitiously taken photographs of children in play areas/other safe environments showing underwear/various degrees of nakedness
4	Posing	Deliberately posed pictures of children, fully/partially clothed/naked (context/amount/organisation, suggests sexual interest)
5	Erotic posing	Deliberately posed pictures of children, fully/ partially clothed/naked, in sexualised or provocative poses
6	Explicit erotic posing	Emphasising genital areas where the child is either fully/ partially clothed/naked
7	Explicit sexual activity	Involves touching, mutual and self masturbation, oral sex/ intercourse by child, not involving an adult
8	Assault	Pictures of children being subjected to a sexual assault involving digital touching, involving an adult
9	Gross assault	Grossly obscene pictures of sexual assault involving penetrative sex/masturbation or oral sex involving an adult
10	Sadistic Bestiality	Pictures showing a child being tied beaten whipped or otherwise subjected to pain Pictures where an animal is involved in some form of sexual behaviour with a child

This was the first time child abuse images had been classified into categories, and was particularly helpful in defining specific types of child abuse images for those working in this area.

For the purposes of criminal offences and sentencing, work was then carried out by the Sentencing Guidelines Council to reduce Quale's classification of images into the following five levels of seriousness, creating a legal definition of sexual abusive images of children:

Levels of seriousness (in ascending order) for sentencing for offences involving pornographic images:

Level 1. Images depicting erotic posing with no sexual activity

Level 2. Non-penetrative sexual activity between children, or solo masturbation by a child

Level 3. Non-penetrative sexual activity between adults and children

Level 4. Penetrative sexual activity involving a child or children, or both children and adults

Level 5. Sadism or penetration of, or by, an animal

Offences involving any form of sexual penetration of the vagina or anus, or penile penetration of the mouth (except where they involve sadism or intercourse with an animal, which fall within level 5), should be classified as activity at level 4 (Sentencing Guidelines Council. 2007. p.113).

1.1.2. Offenders

One of the main problems for those working to prevent sexual abuse against children is how to prevent the child sex offender from meeting, or befriending a child. While there is often a misconception that an offender will be a stranger to the child, Terry Jones, in Silverman and Wilson, (2002) pointed out that:

"the overwhelming majority of offenders know their victim, either through family ties or another relationship, (…) and 80% of abuse takes place in the home of the victim or the offender" p104.

These findings are further supported by studies such as Elliott et al (1995), who found that of those offenders included in their study, two thirds had been previously known to the child.

Given the challenges involved in preventing an offender from accessing a child, many of those involved in investigating offenders and their offences, believe that improving their ability to identify, manage, and treat the offender, is vital in preventing sexual crimes against children (Taylor and Quayle, 2003; Sher, 2007). This has led to a number of studies focused on gaining a better understanding of child sex offenders. While this study does not consider all the issues relating to paedophilia, the following is a brief summary of four studies which consider and classify child sexual offender behaviour.

Silverman and Wilson (2002) explained that various classifications have been used to describe paedophiles and their behaviour, mainly stemming from a psychoanalytical approach, but also taking into consideration cultural and social factors.

Early psychoanalytical studies carried out on individuals who had sexually abused children, generally discounted those who used violence against children. Violent offenders were separately categorised as child rapists, while the group studied, as paedophiles, were categorised as child molesters (Taylor and Quayle, 2003).

Those defined as child molesters were believed to fall into two distinct categories, 'the regressed offender' and 'the fixated offender'. A regressed offender was considered to have developed in a sexually orientated, age appropriate manner. They usually had age appropriate relationships, and often married, but then regressed to sexual relationships with children under specific circumstances, such as an inability to establish a relationship with age appropriate partners, or the absence of an age appropriate partner. A fixated offender was identified as having always desired sexual activity with

children, and one whose primary sexual interest had never developed beyond this desire (Groth, 1982; Powell, 2007).

While continued research in this area has added much to these observations, the classifications of regressed and fixated offenders continue to be used as a basis on which to categorise offenders. This can be seen in the work by Powell (2007, p8), who used the categories of 'fixated' and 'regressed' paedophiles when discussing paedophiles and their typical characteristics.

They can also be seen as the basis of later classifications such as those by Glasser (1989, p9) who classified paedophiles into primary and secondary categories. While secondary categories were seen as being part of another pathology such as schizophrenia, primary paedophiles were then subdivided into 'invariant' and 'pseudo-neurosis' paedophiles. According to Glasser, invariant paedophiles will have been consistently involved with children or adolescents and will have no sexual interest in adults, in much the same manner as a fixated paedophile described by Groth. Similarly Glasser describes the pseudo-neurotic as an adult who upon experiencing difficulties with, or lack of an adult partner, carries out a paedophilic act. Again this would appear to have some parallels with Groth's previous classification of the regressed paedophile.

Work carried out by Knight (1989), considered offenders by a classification typology, a) the amount of interest or focus an offender has in children (fixation), and b) an offender's social ability, such as employment, age appropriate relationships, and responsibilities (social competence). This coupled with the amount of contact an offender had with children led to a classification system of a high contact, or low contact offender.

Other areas of research have attempted to understand why some individuals appear drawn to sexual relationships with children rather than their peer group, with several studies suggesting that the answer may lie in the childhood of a paedophile. For example Silverman and Wilson's (2002) findings suggested that experiences within an individual's childhood can lead to the development of a paedophilic nature if the child's experience is such that it prevents the ability to develop adult and mature relationships, an argument often put forward when treating abusers who were themselves abused.

However as Silverman and Wilson (2002) asked, why then don't all children who have been abused, go on to abuse others? On discussing this point with therapists working with offenders, Silverman and Wilson discovered that other factors relating to social and cultural issues may also play a part. For example some offenders may have poor social skills, be shy, or indeed be ugly, all of which may lead to a lack of social ease with age appropriate partners.

In cases such as these, could it be that an inability to form appropriate relationships might lead to an anonymous medium such as the Internet, where these factors are of less importance?

1.1.3. The Internet and Offenders

"The Internet can powerfully leverage your ability to find, manage, and share information. Never before in human history has such a valuable resource been available to so many people at such little cost" (Living Internet, 2007).

In July 2005, 14.6% of the world's population was recorded as using the Internet, of these a total of 48% were recorded as being within the European Union. The increase in Internet users amongst the European Union from the year 2000 to the year 2005 was almost 140% (Powell, 2007).

Meanwhile research from the National Criminal Intelligence (NCIS) Service, Interpol, Europol and the FBI, found the Internet to be the principal conduit for child abuse images (Silverman, 2002).

While it is difficult to calculate the extent or number of child sexual abuse images on the Internet, recent figures suggest there are currently more than one million sexual abusive images of children on the Internet at any one time, with around 200 new images being posted daily (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006).

As Grange (2003) pointed out, there have always been paedophiles within society, and their practice is neither new, nor any less criminal, with the advent of the Internet.

Unfortunately however, the freedom of the Internet has opened up the opportunity to correspond with others of a similar belief, combined with anonymous access to those who may be vulnerable, for those individuals with paedophilic tendencies.

While many of those individual's identified accessing child abuse images to enhance their sexual feelings, argued that by downloading child abuse images, they were less likely to carry out an actual offence against a child, several studies carried out in this area suggested this may not be the case (Sullivan, 2003). Furthermore Sullivan (2003) argued that those who deliberately accessed child abuse images for sexual arousal or fantasy, were in fact reducing their inhibiters to offend, and potentially increasing the likelihood of carrying out a sexual act upon a child.

Individuals who stated that accessing images decreased their likelihood to offend also appeared to overlook the fact that such images are often of a real child being abused, even if they were not the actual offenders carrying out the abuse (Quayle, 2004, as cited in Calder, 2004).

1.1.4. The child

"When my children were growing up, sometimes I would look at them doing normal happy things like playing and I used to think 'I can't remember doing anything like that as a child'. I can't remember anything out of my childhood except horror", Lyn Costello p.48 (as cited in Silverman and Wilson, 2002).

Figures on the number of victims of child abuse remain limited, due to the hidden nature of the crime, although the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) found that nearly 70,000 crimes involving gross indecency with a child, and unlawful sexual intercourse with a female child, were reported between 1980 and 2001, (MacVean, and Spindler, 2003).

While it is impossible to quantify the damage done to the victim of child sexual abuse, a study by Spataro et al (2004) found a link between child sexual abuse, validated by medical examination at the time of the abuse, and an increase in rates of childhood and adult mental disorders. Sexually abused children were more likely to suffer from

anxiety and acute stress disorders, and were four times as likely to have been referred to mental health services. They were also five times more likely to suffer from mental health problems such as major affective disorders, anxiety disorders and personality disorder in adulthood.

Wortley and Smallbone (2006) found that in a study of 100 child victims of sexual abuse, children also described physical pain around the genital area, headaches, loss of appetite, and sleeplessness, as well as feelings of emotional isolation, anxiety and fear. In later years the victims described feelings of deep despair, worthlessness and hopelessness, with many victims having difficulty establishing healthy emotional and sexual relationships (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006).

Unlike child sexual abuse where no images have been recorded, the case of a child whose sexual abuse has been recorded differs in that it is not only the sexual act that can impact on the child; it is also the enduring legacy of the images. As Taylor and Quale (2003) explained, many of the current circulating images of a child being abused will be several years old, in some cases as much as thirty years old. These children are now adults, often with children of their own, and yet records of the sexual abuse carried out against them continue to be sent around the world, a permanent record of the violation carried out against them.

The impact of sexual abuse, for both the child, and their innocent carers, cannot be overstated. However, Judy Wheaton, a member of the League against Sadistic Abuse (LASA) a support group for the non abusing parent, or carer, of children who have alleged abuse, explained that other issues may compound both the distress of the child, and that of innocent carers. The fear, or reality, of not being believed, the lack of appropriate sentencing, the fear of having your child removed from your care; but most of all, the lack of supportive, sympathetic, and appropriately trained professionals, such as police officers, social workers and judges, can make an already devastating situation, far worse (Wheaton, 2003).

So what of the professionals who work within this area? How can they be trained and supported to ensure that their support to others is appropriate and empathetic?

How also is the risk to their own wellbeing managed, and what, if any, are the factors that may preclude this?

1.2. Occupational Stress within Emotionally Traumatic Areas of Work

It is generally acknowledged that stress can have both positive and negative implications, and that what is of more importance is how an individual views and responds to specific stressors (More, 1992).

Regrettably, it is the difficulty in clarifying individual stressors that makes this such a complex issue to manage, with one of the main problems being the ambiguity of the term 'stress' and the corresponding measurement of what is an individual response (Cox *et al,* 2000). As Tyler (1997) pointed out, the problem with defining stress is that it is complicated by the individual's response, with situations and experiences that may be stressful to one individual, having no impact on another, who may be in exactly the same situation.

Nevertheless, a general definition of stress can be summed up as:

> "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". (Cox et al, 2000; HSE, 2007).

1.2.1. Occupational Stress

The subject of stress within all occupations has been a topic of research since the early 1950's when debate reopened on the possible cause of psychiatric trauma to soldiers in the First World War, Tehran (2004). More recently Brown (2000) (cited in Fleishman *et al,* 2000) identified that a combination of the cost incurred through sickness absence and medical retirement, coupled with the loss of productivity, has done much to highlight the importance of reducing those factors believed to be a cause of occupational stress.

An agreed concept, or clear definition of occupational stress continues to defeat researchers, and while there is a plethora of literature on occupational stress, identifying

numerous types of models (Dullard and Jorge, 2003), whatever model used, it appears that factors such as individual control, and workload remain significant, although the degree, to which researchers believe each factor is central to the issue, can differ considerably (Cooper and Payne, 1991).

The fact that occupational stress may appear more complex than other occupational health issues, in no way precludes the employer's legal responsibility to their staff. Although several Acts have contributed to the directives and guidance now in place, the majority of modern day regulations were born from the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (Parliament 1974). To comply with these regulations a 'suitable and sufficient' risk assessment is required, and in the case of those working in particularly stressful environments, it is particularly important that the assessment considers any specific causes of stress, and identifies those with a common stress factor, against those which are specific to the role (HSE, 2007).

1.2.3. Law Enforcement and Stress

While there is an acknowledgement that occupational stress occurs in all areas of employment, Dollard et al's (2003) study suggested that the stress factors amongst service professions required a slightly different form of management. Dollard et al, identified roles such as teachers, doctors, nurses, and police officers, as being specific examples of service professions, and suggested that the particular demands of these roles imposed a variety of cognitive, behavioural and emotional demands on the service employee, not necessarily found within other non-service roles. A previous study by Violanti and Paton (1999) also supported this idea and identified two categories believed to contribute to the stressors found within the law enforcement environment.

- Organisation Stressors, such as administration, paperwork, and supervisory issues.

and

- Compassion Fatigue type stressors such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PSTD) or secondary traumatic stress (STS) which may be a response to the nature of the work, or identifying closely with victims.

1.2.4. Organisational Stressors

Routine tasks such as administration or bureaucratic aspects have long been rated as highly stressful by those within law enforcement (Liberman *et al*.2002; Stevens et al, 2005) along with shift work, and unsympathetic supervisors who may also lack an understanding of the work environment (Patterson, 1999). A study carried out by Alexander et al (1995), suggested that rather than critical incidents, or exposure to trauma, the main sources of stress came from job design issues such as administration, and organisational issues such as work overload/underload, or people issues such as inadequate encouragement, or inappropriate scrutiny from supervisors. These findings were supported by a study carried out by Toch (2002), which also identified issues with supervisors and administration as significant stressors within law enforcement. Interestingly, Toch found that the biggest cause of stress appeared to be related to policies or bureaucracy decisions, which impacted at all levels from promotion to discrimination, and inequality to injustice.

Another important factor is that of job satisfaction, as there is increasing evidence that job satisfaction can reduce the likelihood of organisational stress. Toch (2002) pointed out that for many staff in law enforcement job satisfaction outweighs the possible impact of occupational stress. However, the factors that make up job satisfaction are complex, and can also be bound up with an individual's sense of identity or worth. For example, as More's (1992) study found, an individual's sense of identity will often be intertwined with that of their professional role, and like Dollard et al (2003), More believed this may be enhanced for those whose role falls within the social context, such as the law enforcement officer. In such cases, evidence suggested that this could lead to the individual's 'work role' playing an increasingly significant part in an individual's life, beyond that of financial gain, leading More to suggest that to gain job satisfaction, other factors or components, must be satisfactorily addressed.

The idea of identity and personality being linked to occupational stress within law enforcement is not new. In particular psychologists have questioned whether police officers possess certain attitudes due to their personality, and whether this is what draws them to the world of policing, or whether those attitudes are caused by some aspects of the training process (Brogan et al, 1988). A study of police officers'

personality and the possible links between stress carried out by Ortega et al (2006) concluded that tenure, length of time in service, and personality traits, specifically neuroticism, were positively related to occupational stress and the type of coping strategies used.

Finally consideration was given to studies on gender within law enforcement and the specific stressors, if any; these may have for staff viewing child abuse images.

Several studies have been carried out which have explored work related stress and gender. Interestingly the results of those studies carried out within law enforcement differ considerably. A study by Toch (2002) suggested that female officers were less likely to suffer from stress, while a previous study by Anderson et al (1995), identified that female officers were more likely to suffer from stress. The results from Anderson et al appeared to be supported by a study by Cornille and Meyers, (1999) which found that female civilian staff, working on child abuse cases, were more likely to exhibit secondary trauma symptoms than their male colleagues.
However, there is also evidence that female officers in the UK are more likely to be given potentially emotive cases involving trafficking in women, child abuse and domestic violence then their male counterparts (Heidenson, 2000).

1.2.5. Compassion Fatigue Type Stressors

A study by Stevenson (2002) considered the welfare issues of those investigating child abuse on the Intranet, and suggested that while not exclusive to police officers, Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) and Vicarious Traumatisation, (VT), were particularly applicable to the area of this research.

Vicarious traumatisation is defined by Pearlman & Saakvitne (1995, p. 279) as:

“The cumulative transformative effect upon the trauma therapist of working with survivors of traumatic life events. It is a process through which the therapist's inner experience is negatively transformed through empathic engagement with clients' trauma material” (p.31).

Meanwhile Figley's (1995) study explained Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS), as the phenomenon of learning about another's traumatic ordeal and, in the process, experiencing traumatic stress. According to Figley, those who work directly with, or have direct exposure to trauma victims on a regular basis, are just as likely as the primary victims to experience traumatic stress symptoms and disorders, leading Figley (1995, p.4), to conclude that:

"People can be traumatized without actually being physically harmed or threatened with harm. They can be traumatized simply by learning about the traumatic event".

Furthermore, Figley believed that those who are exposed to traumatized children are particularly vulnerable to the side effects of STS.

These findings corresponded with the findings of Cornille and Meyers (1999) who studied the prevalence and severity of secondary traumatic stress symptoms among child protective service (CPS) staff who interview child abuse victims. The results of their study identified that up to 37% of the respondents were found to be experiencing clinical levels of emotional distress associated with STS.

Cornille and Meyers (1999) also pointed out that professionals exposed to traumatic material, experience the same array of traumatic stress symptoms as those reported by victims of traumatic events. Disturbed sleep, anger, fear, suppression of emotions, nightmares, flashbacks, irritability, anxiety, alienation, feelings of insanity, loss of control, and suicidal thoughts have also been experienced by crisis workers and therapists following exposure to trauma victims.

The psychological symptoms associated with both STS and VT, were also explored in a study by Steed and Downing (1998). Their study, carried out with twelve therapists working mainly within the area of sexual abuse/assault, found that the therapists' responses to hearing traumatic client material included anger, pain, frustration, sadness, shock, horror and distress. Although the anger was mainly directed toward the offender, it was also sometimes expressed in global statements regarding inhumanity. Many negative effects outside the therapeutic session were reported, and were found to be in various domains of functioning, including physiological, emotional, professional and

interpersonal. Physiological effects included diminished energy levels, somatic complaints and sleep disturbances.

Seven of the twelve participants also reported experiencing overwhelming imagery, dreams and intrusive thoughts. Emotional responses included comments such as:

"I'm more vigilant, and have more safety concerns, and sometimes when I see people with their children I wonder whether they are abusing them" and "I always thought of the world as intrinsically good, but now I know differently".

Positive self-identity statements included:

"I see myself as being much more adjustable and flexible", and "I've become really clear about what I want to do with my life, and my own identity".

Both positive and negative coping strategies were identified and discussed within the study. Positive coping strategies reported included taking care of their own physical and psychological needs, efforts to maintain healthy eating, sleeping and exercise habits, and recognising the need for self-care and to pursue activities outside their professional duties. Negative coping strategies included drinking too much coffee and alcohol, risk-taking behaviours such as speeding, and withdrawing from family and friends.

Participants also reported awareness of the importance of boundaries in both their personal and professional lives, the need for de-briefing, and ongoing professional development and supervision. While all had experienced episodes of feeling an overwhelming sense of helplessness, most found these episodes precipitated negative self-talk and a crisis of confidence.

The issues surrounding occupational stress are enormously complex. Consideration must be given to the external working environment, the specific stressors of the role, and the individual coping strategies. (Harkness, *et al*, 2005). There is also no doubt that the issue of child sex abuse on the Internet, is now a global problem with paedophiles from all continents, communicating and sharing images of child sex abuse with each other (Taylor and Quayle, 2003). Given the potential increase in the recruitment for

investigators in this area (Silverman, 2002), and the legal requirement to protect the wellbeing of those staff (HSE, 2007), it appears that the need to understand the most appropriate way of supporting and managing staff viewing child sex abuse images is vital.

2. The Study

In 2002 the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) for Computer Crime, identified that the increase in child abuse images being seized on the Internet, and correspondingly being viewed by investigators, may have an emotional impact on the staff carrying out this work, and requested that a study be carried out to identify possible welfare issues for staff viewing, or listening, to child abuse images.

The result of this study suggested that viewing and/or listening to child abuse images could be both distressing and emotionally draining. To respond to these findings, fifteen recommendations were made to reduce the emotional impact of such work on those staff, (See appendix 1). It was also recommended that further studies into the impact of this work on investigators should be carried out (Stevenson, 2002).

In 2005 the National Police Leadership Centre, Centrex, agreed a research study should be carried out by the Head of Occupational Health and Welfare for the National Crime Squad, (NCS) now part of Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)

The aims of this study were threefold:

- To consider the specific welfare issues for supervisors/managers of 'child abuse on line' units.

- To support recruitment of staff to units dealing with child abuse on-line images by considering how best to identify, and respond to welfare issues at recruitment level.

- To consider factors involved in the development of a 'best practice' strategy for welfare management of staff viewing child abuse images on-line.

2.2. Method

2.2.1. Theory

Identifying appropriate participants, selecting a relevant method of collecting of data, and isolating a suitable analysis approach are vital, and should support the chosen methodology if the study is to be meaningful (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In the case of this study, the method chosen was a qualitative approach which, as Silverman (2002) points out, has often been used with excellent outcomes within the social science field, and is seen as particularly valuable where there has been little previous research in a given area.

Qualitative methodology is valued for its ability to explore diverse views by creating an opportunity for opinions and ideas not previously considered, to be discussed and included (Rivers Centre for Traumatic Stress, 2006). Depending on the approach, method, and data collection chosen, qualitative research can also allow participants to describe, in their own words, their experiences, perceptions, and beliefs, giving an opportunity for a richness of description not available within quantitative methodology (Howitt and Cramer, 2005).

Consideration was also given to the specific type of data the researcher wished to collect. While it was believed crucial to allow the opportunity for unconsidered themes to emerge, it was also acknowledged that the study would be driven by the theoretical interest of the researcher, and the pre-determined aims of the study. The theoretical approach allows the researcher to identify relevant literature, and prepare a framework to draw out the main themes and patterns relating to the particular study. For this study an initial semi-structured interview schedule was designed, following an initial literature review. This framework was revisited following the pilot study, at which point those questions which appeared irrelevant, or misleading, were removed (See appendix 2). The schedule allowed the opportunity for participants to expand on the questions, and unconsidered themes to emerge, while the main focus of the interviews remained concentrated on specific areas of pre-determined interest to the researcher.

The analysis method chosen was that of thematic analysis at semantic level. This allows for a flexible approach which enables researchers to identify themes and patterns within

a study involving participant interviews, by examining the beliefs and experiences of the participants. Further advantages of using thematic analysis include the ability to highlight both similarities, and differences, across the data set and the opportunity to consider social, as well as psychological interpretation of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At semantic level there is no requirement to look beyond the surface meaning of data, given by the participant (Braun and Clarke, 2006). By working with semantic themes, the researcher was able to consider the descriptions within the transcripts and organise themes which considered the significance of the emerging patterns before attempting to theorise the patterns, both for their own significance, and also against that of previous relevant research.

2.2.2. Participants

Participants volunteered to participate in this study in response to an email invitation which was sent out to all those units known to the researcher, as currently working in the area of child sexual abuse on-line investigation (See appendix 3).

As a minimum requirement to take part in the study, participants had to have worked in the arena of on-line child abuse investigation for at least a minimum of one year. Participants were also required to hold at least a minimal management or supervision responsibility within this area of work.

The email was sent to staff from the majority of the UK police forces, as well as other associated agencies. The email set out a brief summary of the aims of the study, required participant criteria, and an outline of how the study would be undertaken. Potential participants were then given a two month deadline in which to indicate an interest to participate. The first twelve positive responses to the invitation, who met the study criteria, were then selected and requested to indicate a date, and location, for the interview to take place.

Information sheets were given to all participants, accompanied by a consent form. (See appendix 4). All participants were requested to sign the consent form before the interview. The consent form informed participants that confidentiality would be

maintained except in the case of answers which suggested a serious and significant risk of harm to themselves or to others.

Due to the sensitive nature of the information being gathered, potential ethical issues related to this study were carefully considered. Ethical approval was sought from both Middlesex University and Bramshill Police College, prior to the start of the study (See appendix 5).

All participants were also offered the opportunity to attend a one-to-one session with a clinical psychologist following the interview, however all participants declined. Finally a questionnaire to gather demographic details such as age, sex, relationship status, education information, and length of time in this work area was filled out by all participants (See appendix 6).

Table 2. Breakdown of participant sample by length of time in role, and gender:

Length of time in role	**Male**	**Female**	**Totals**
1 year	2		2
Between 1and 3 years	4		4
Between 3 and 5 years		2	2
Between 5 and 8 years	1	2	3
More than 8 years	1		1
Total number of Participants	8	4	12

All participants identified themselves as 'white British', with an age range of fifty-six years (eldest) to thirty-six years (youngest). The participants worked within a number of different areas, with six participants identifying themselves as working within law enforcement, five within Government agencies, and one within education. With regard to marital status, nine of the participants were married with children, two were single without children, and one was divorced with children.

The roles and responsibilities between the participants varied considerably and have been placed into the following four groups, for ease of understanding:

Group 1. *Participants who had responsibility for several units including a designated child abuse on-line unit.*

The main role of these participants was that of senior management, and included interaction with hierarchy, policy making, security, procurement, staff recruitment and retention. One participant was also responsible for a final decision on the classification of images. Participants in this area were unlikely to see images of child abuse more than once every three months. There were two participants in this group.

Group 2. *Participants who had responsibility for a designated child abuse on-line unit.*

The main role for these participants was often similar to that of the previous group, but with responsibility for one department rather than several. Participants were expected to attend regular management meetings, and communicate outcomes to their units. Participants in this group were also likely to be responsible for allocation of workload, and the welfare of the staff within the unit. Participants in this area were likely to see images at least monthly. There were three participants in this group.

Group 3. *Participants who have responsibility for a team of investigators within a designated child abuse on-line unit.*

The main role for these participants centred on the analysis of the material (images), searching databases, and the setting up of intelligence logs. All participants in this group were involved in intense computer work. Participants also described regular contact with other agencies (usually via telephone), and a requirement to supervise, and train new members of staff. Participants in this area were likely to see images daily. There were five participants in this group.

Group 4. *Participants who have responsibility for a specific area within a designated child abuse on-line unit.*

In this group one participant did not view images as part of their role but had seen images on two occasions. This participant was responsible for the overall running of the department including administration requirements. The other participant usually saw images at least weekly. This participant was responsible for liaison with police forces and agencies also working within child abuse on line, training and education, and policy work.

2.2.3. Analysis

The interviews focused the participants on their own experiences of recruitment to their role, their 'in post' emotional experiences, and their evaluation of their current welfare support provision (See appendix 7).

Wherever possible a quiet room was identified where the interviews could be carried out without interruption. The interviews were carried out on a one-to-one basis, to allow participants the opportunity to discuss and explore potentially sensitive and personal issues. Interviews took between fifty-five minutes, and one hour fifteen minutes. With the agreement of the participants, all interviews were tape recorded, and later transcribed by the occupational health administrator for SOCA. The tapes were then analysed by the researcher for key words, phrases, and specific themes.

On completion and transcription of the interviews, a breakdown of the data was required to allow for analysis of the data to be carried out appropriately (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Each participant was also coded with a unique number which was used to identify their transcript throughout the study. All transcripts were checked against the original tapes and each transcript was then read several times to allow the researcher to re-familiarise herself with the data.

As the data was to be coded manually, rather than by using a designated software package, a basic coding framework which reduced the data into more manageable segments was designed. This was achieved by colour coding specific topics as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). Specific extracts were then sub-coded within a framework which also considered the cross-over between the data sets. The coded data was then revisited and careful consideration given to the emerging patterns (themes). At this point the differing codes were sorted into specific themes with some data being discarded, and other data that clearly supported overarching themes being utilised to produce an initial thematic 'map'. Emerging patterns were also considered in the light of the empirical literature which helped to set the analysis of this study, within the context of broader research, as recommended by Layder (1993)

The final thematic map identified 18 overarching themes of specific relevance to this study as set out below:

- *Definition of Images*
- *Emotional Wellbeing of Self*
- *Self esteem/Self worth*
- *Sexual behaviour*
- *Family*
- *Workload*
- *Job Satisfaction/Job Frustration*
- *External Perception of others*
- *Supervision*
- *Recruitment*
- *Diversity-Gender, Sexuality, Ethnicity.*
- *Emotional Wellbeing of others*
- *Work Environment*
- *Management*

In some cases an unexpected link between two themes became evident during analysis, for example emotional wellbeing and family. In this case a secondary theme was then sub-headed under a main theme heading.

The following six areas were then selected for specific analysis and discussion.

- ***Definition of Images***
- ***Emotional Wellbeing: Response to images-Family-Impact on social norms***
- ***Sexual behaviour***
- ***Work Environment: Workload-Welfare-Relationship with colleagues***
- ***Diversity: Gender-Sexuality-Ethnicity***
- ***Management: Role responsibility-Senior management***

The selection of the six main themes for the study was carried out based on the areas that appeared most relevant to the aims of the research. Particular consideration was

also given to those topics that most appeared to impact on participants' emotional wellbeing.

Topics and participants' extracts were then sub-divided into a category within each over-arching theme, with the analysis and accompanying discussions presented under each over-arching theme. Wherever possible the original dialogue has been used, although all names and identifying features have been changed. Where it was judged that original dialogue may indicate the identity of the participant, the dialogue has been presented in a summarised version to protect the anonymity of the individual.

For clarity, the level of exposure by participants to child sex abuse images throughout the following analysis has been classified as:

Regular exposure-At least weekly exposure to child sex abuse images.
Moderate exposure-At least monthly exposure to child sex abuse images.
Minimal exposure-Exposure to child sex abuse images no more than three monthly.

2.2.4. Definition of Images

As previously discussed, the definition regarding the severity, of child sexual abuse images is particularly important, especially if there is the likelihood of legal proceedings based upon the images (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2007), therefore this study considered child sexual abuse to be any image that could be classified as a criminal offence in UK law.

With this in mind the twelve participants were all requested to give examples of the types of images they had seen in order to explore whether the images participants were being asked to view, could be considered as sexually abusive images of children. Male participant R.2 gave the following example:

'I've seen a child with a dog in a bed, where the dog was having intercourse with the girl, and there was a man on the bed who was sort of making it happen, putting everything in the right position for that to take place'.

The sentencing classification at level five includes sadism or penetration of, or by, an animal. While the above image could be clearly classified as a level five under the levels set by the Sentencing Guidelines Council, (2007), participants explained that deciding the classification of some images can be complex, such as the example by R.11:

"These are sort of young, even babies, being penetrated and ejaculated onto, tortured, (and) bound up".

As sadism is defined as 'a form of sexual perversion in which the individual takes pleasure in inflicting mental and physical pain on others' (Weller and Wells, 1990), it may be considered that the sexual penetration of a baby or young child will always be sadistic, but this is not necessarily judged as proven in legal terms. If however, it is clear in the images that the child is also being tortured, then the images can be classified as a level five.

Other images described by the participants, would normally be classified as a level four as these all involved penetrative sexual activity with a child or children, or both children and adults, such as the image of penile penetration of the mouth, described by female participant R.10:

"a young child of about 3, possibly 4, pretty little blond haired little girl, and the other figure in the picture was of the lower half of a man with an erect penis which he was shoving into her mouth".

Again, the image below described by male participant R.5, would be classified as a level four due to the sexual penetration of the child by an adult:

"*I would say the child was probably 5 to 6 months old being anally penetrated by a penis and vagina as well"*.

Having asked all participants to describe the type of images they were required to view, all participants involved in this study, including those who did not view images on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, were able to give examples of images that would be

classified as a level four or five under the Sexual Offences Act (2003), under the levels set by the Sentencing Guidelines Council, (2007).

Unexpectedly this study found that, due in part to their role and experience of viewing images of child sexual abuse, some participants are now responsible for other types of computer work including that of terrorist images, with six participants indicating they also now view images such as beheadings, torture, and/or the killing of Allied personnel in Iraq.

2.2.5. Emotional Wellbeing

The emotional wellbeing of participants was a complex issue which appeared to be related to several factors including the type of medium they are exposed to. For example eight of the participants explained that they found videos with sound far more distressing than still images, as discussed here by male participant R: 5.

"I would rather throw myself out of the window than listen to that over a protracted period of time, and the live images as well. (…) when you're laying in your bed at 3 o'clock in the morning, after the kids have woken you up, it's not the images that come into your brain, it's the voices"

As several of the issues relating to emotional wellbeing appeared interlinked, for clarity an attempt has been made to subdivide the information into specific areas, with the first area explored relating to the participant's emotional response, if any, to the images they viewed while at work.

2.2.5.1. Response to Images of Child Sexual Abuse

It appears from the statements made, that the length of time participants have been involved in this role, and the levels of exposure to images of abuse, may determine the amount and type of emotional impact the images have on staff. The following extract was from male participant R.1, who has had minimal exposure to images, and has been working in this area for less than two years.

"I have to say I'm disturbed by, viewing ever single image, I find it disgusting, I really (do not) like it in the slightest".

Furthermore as this next extract from male participant R.2 explains, having to acknowledge the sheer volume of the images appeared to be particularly distressing for staff working on the periphery:

I: "*How often are you personally, likely to view child abuse images"?*

R.2: *"A little, not a huge amount, you'll be talking to somebody, and there's something there that you didn't expect to see, and I suppose that can catch you out really (…)*

I: "*Is there anything about the images you find disturbing"?*

R.2: *"I find the quantity disturbing. You know there was a period a few months ago, whenever I went in there, there was something else on the screen in the background, and you just think Christ, when will this end"?*

While the researcher was unable to find any studies relating to measuring the length of time exposed to images of child sex abuse, and the impact on health, Cornille and Meyers (1999), in their study on the prevalence and severity of secondary traumatic stress (STS) on Child Protective Service (CPS) workers, found that levels of exposure, and the length of time of exposure to cases of child abuse did contribute to the likelihood of CPS workers suffering from emotional distress. These findings suggested that a high exposure on a short-term basis was more likely to cause emotional distress than the number of years an individual had been working in this area.

It was not only participants with minimal exposure who expressed distress at images of children being abused. What follows is an extract from a male participant R.11, who has been exposed to images of children being sexually abused on a regular basis, for at least three years:

“Especially when there's actually torture and penetration of very very young children, (it) is just absolutely awful and I think that is where it's most disturbing, (is) where you see bound children or cut children as well, I think that's really disturbing stuff”.

All of the participants had worked in this area for more than one year with six participants, two males and four females, having worked in this area for more than three years. It was noted that the longer participants had been working in this area, the more likelihood that they would also be in the regular or moderate category for exposure to child sexual abuse images.

While eleven of the twelve participants considered that they had been distressed by the images of child sexual abuse at some point in their job, one male participant indicated that he had never felt emotionally distressed by the images. Although this participant considered the reason for this was due to previous life experiences in his role as a police officer, some research has suggested that male officers may have more difficulty in acknowledging emotional distress than female officers (Patterson (2003).

Interestingly, later in the interview the same participant indicated discomfort with certain types of images, particularly bestiality and the infliction of pain on a child. He also discussed a particular image involving a six month old child forced to endure anal sex with an adult male, and again indicated that he was not completely comfortable with this image.

For participants who indicated they did find the images emotionally distressing, there appeared to be a conscious decision to protect themselves from the emotional side of this work by removing themselves from the emotive part of the image. For example male participant R.9, explained that:

“we have a tendency to, not ignore, but you look at the image, and basically what what's involved in that image, and you've a tendency to forget that that's somebody's son or daughter”.

This approach appears to mirror the results of Wright, Powell, and Ridge (2006) who found that child abuse investigators taking part in their study had identified that a

degree of desensitising was required to allow them to function professionally. Conversely a study carried out by Stevens and Higgins (2002) which measured the response of female child protection workers, suggested that while coping strategies can be a supportive protection against work related burnout, careful consideration should be given to the personal histories of staff who have suffered child hood trauma themselves, to avoid inappropriately high levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, or trauma symptoms such as vicarious traumatisation.

Observations from six of participants, who have had extensive exposure to child abuse images, centred on the loss of innocence for the child, and the abuse of trust by the adult offender. Often it was this rather than the physical abuse of the child that appeared to cause the most emotional distress to participants, suggesting that while participants may have identified coping strategies for the actual viewing of images, they continue to reflect on the perceived inhumanity of the images. The following extract was taken from male participant R.6, who has been viewing child abuse images regularly for more than five years:

"(It's) the abuse of trust, and the abuse of the privilege (…) the destruction in my eyes, of confidence and trust and love, what love should mean between adults and children, and that's the thing that personally, disturbs me and gets me upset".

Male participant R7 agreed, making the following observation:

"To me children are innocent, especially at that age, and they're not willing, participants in anything that's going on (…), how anyone can take such innocence and mould it for such a sort of horrid end, bedazzles me"

Interestingly these comments were similar to the comments made by participants in the study by Steed and Downing (1998) as discussed previously, and may be explained by work carried out by Dyregrov (1995). His work suggested that when there is daily exposure to traumatised children, the helper's values may change towards other adults such as parents, or carers, and they may become less trustful, and more cynical of others. These findings were further supported by previous studies such as that by Pearlman and Maclan (1995), who noted schema disruptions for trauma therapists

working with abused clients, and identified significant disruption of belief about self and others amongst their participants.

It appeared that the participants could be broken down into two groups. Participants working with the images on a regular, or moderate basis, and participants who were based within units in a managerial role but who may only have minimal exposure to child abuse images. Generally, although not exclusively, those participants who viewed images on a regular basis had a lighter managerial role within the unit.

Overall the difference between the two groups appeared to be governed by the amount, and regularity of exposure. Participant's who only viewed images intermittently, appeared to be more likely to focus on, and be more shocked by, the actual abuse in the image. Female participant R: 10, who has very minimal exposure to child abuse images, discussed her reaction to her most recent exposure below:

"I had never seen anything like it at all. I'd imagined, which I think you can imagine but you don't actually know until you've seen it".

Female participant R: 8 who has worked in this area for more than three years, and has moderate exposure to the images, attempted to explain the process of distancing from the content of the images in more depth:

"I suppose the shock element is lessened slightly but not it's not necessarily the disturbance or the disgust at them but the shock the pure shock element when on your first exposure to that sort of material can be quite, that kind of stays with you for a bit longer and then and then you know as you see more and more I think it tends to disturb you slightly less".

Meanwhile participants viewing images on a regular basis discussed the importance of repressing feelings of anger or distress caused by the sexual acts within the images, suggesting they focused instead on the technical aspects of the images.
For example R.4, a female participant who has regular exposure to child abuse images, and has worked in this area for over three years explained that:

"*I tend to think of it, if I didn't do something about this photograph it could continue, I can't put right what's happened previously, and so what I gotta do is focus on who's taken that photograph"*.

R.9, a male participant who also has regular exposure to child abuse images, and has been working in this area for 2 years agreed, suggesting that:

"You know you've got a job (to do), and you know that you're going to do a good thing in relation to putting this person before a court and hopefully behind bars and basically make the streets safe".

2.2.5.2. Family and Social Relationships

Eight of the participants commented on the importance of a positive home life, in particular that of supportive partners, while three participants made a connection between how they were feeling about certain areas or aspects of their personal life, and the potential impact on their normal coping strategies, as male participant R.5 explains:

" *the way it sort of can affect, is dependent upon, I actually think how tired you are when you actually look at the images, how much pressure you're under either at work or at home, cos home life has a tremendous bearing on things.(or) if you're feeling a bit under the weather as well. (…) Or you've had you know, bad news at home, and looking at images that remind you of your children or close relatives can also leave you open, open to actually store these in your mind, (which) ordinarily you wouldn't do"*.

Stressors developing from interaction between work and family are defined as part of a process known as work family conflict (WFC) with the two types of WFC explained 'as when work is perceived as interfering with family' (W F) and 'when family is perceived as interfering with work (F W)' (Rich, et al. 2007, p1).

While the effects of stressors within different occupations will vary depending on the function and setting of the job, a study on teachers carried out by Rich, et al, found that spousal support significantly reduced F W conflict. These findings were further supported by Perrone, et al (2007) who also found spousal support to be influential in relation to job satisfaction at work.

Two participants also expressed concerns for colleagues who live alone, with male participant R.11 commenting:

"It's always seemed to me having years of doing this, is that people that perhaps you know, live on their own, go home and have got nothing else, or have nothing else but their job and that's where the danger can come in".

Interestingly, this comment may be particularly relevant to female staff working in this area, given the results of a study by He *et al* (2002). The study, which considered male and female police officers, suggested that while female officers were statistically more likely to suffer from higher levels of somatization and depression than male officers, they were also more likely to use a strategy such as talking to a spouse, relative or friend as a constructive coping mechanism.

2.2.5.3. Impact on Social Normality

R7: *" the worst image that I saw was of a young boy, (…) it just so happened that that the photo was not entirely dissimilar to my oldest son, it was just a naked boy, on a couch um, basically opening his anus, there was no interference from anyone else in the shot, but when I looked at it, it did make me feel quite sick, 'cos again it was a very similar age, it wasn't a particularly young child, it was probably 12, 13, and the build of the child, and the colour of his hair and the shape of his head, were very, very similar to mine (son)"*

Six participants discussed the difficulties of coping with images that remind them of their own children, or children they know. Four participants also explained that apparently insignificant incidents may lead to unexpected contamination of areas within their personal lives. For example R. 12 a female participant, explained her reaction to a work related incident:

"I think the most upset I've been, was when I got called in so I went out to the car late at night, got into the car, and there was a CD that was already running in there, and a song started playing, and it was called "In the arms of the angels". Viewing what I'd just viewed and then going out and listening to that song, and that's it now for me that

song. And I was really upset that I'd made that link, and it's in my head now and I can't get rid of the link".

The feelings discussed by the participants above bear similarities to those discussed by Dyregrov (1995), who suggested that mental images in all the sensory modalities are likely to be more vivid, and remain for longer when those images relate to traumatised children. For example, this extract from an ambulance worker 'We carried two dead children in our ambulance, from one of the stretchers a leg with a yellow sock was visible. Now I see yellow socks everywhere'. p 34.

When discussing social propriety towards children, there appeared to be a significant difference for male participants compared to that of female participants. None of the female participants felt that their behaviour with children had changed, and none had given conscious thought to how their behaviour with children may be viewed by others, as exampled below:

1: *So do you think viewing child abuse images has changed your behaviour with other people's children at all?*

Female R. 12: *"No, no I don't think so, now thinking about it, with my friends' children I do hug them, and I do give them a kiss, and it's completely spontaneous, because that's what I do with my own child, and because these are people that I see on a regular basis. I do the same to theirs, but then they do the same to my boy, and I don't find it strange. Now if one of their husbands..."*

Meanwhile six of the eight male participants felt that they had needed to make a conscious and determined decision to not to allow this area of work to change their behaviour with children, including their own. Two male participants also expressed concern at how their behaviour towards children may be viewed by others, as male participant R.6 explained:

"I used to say if I'm walking around and you see me staring at kids, give me a dig, cos it might be misinterpreted".

2.2.6. Sexual behaviour

Six of the participants indicated varying degrees of concern regarding the impact of viewing child sexual abuse images on their sexual behaviour. Interestingly, no female participants felt there had been an impact on, or change in, their sexual behaviour:

I: *What about your behaviour sexually. Do you think that this (job) has ever had an impact on that, either positive or negative, or has changed your sexual behaviour?*

R.9: *"(…) so yes, when I get home the last thing I think about is basically my private life, as such. Not all the time (…). it's just, it's you know, so from a negative point of view it has, anyway I've discussed this with my wife, and she totally understands, so it has been a slight negative, not a major impact, but slight, slight impact"*.

For this participant, an understanding partner appeared to reduce the possibility of any serious negative impacts on his wellbeing. Although not directly related to sexual behaviour, several studies have identified that married male officers suffer less psychological stress compared to that of unmarried male officers (He *et al*, 2002).

Five male participants also expressed concerns related to the possibility of sexual arousal from the images on themselves, or that of colleagues. The following extract is one of the male participants talking about his sexual response to an image:

"it's crossed my mind, why am I working in that area? Er, and am I attracted to it, and I don't think I am. But one image where, it was the guy that had taken a picture of himself with a young girl performing oral sex with him, and it was an image that stuck in my mind, kept sort of flashing back and it still does to a certain extent. Um and in my mind I'd put the face of a girl I want in it".

As Brockman and Bluglass (1996) explained, sexual paraphilias, or deviant sexual behaviour encompass a number of sexual behaviours of which paedophilia is one. While studies show that most individuals are capable of being aroused by deviant stimuli in laboratory conditions, little is understood about why some individuals will act on a deviant urge, while others do not, Brockman and Bluglass (1996).

Another participant R. 3 explained his concerns as a supervisor on a unit where staff are required to view images of children being sexually abused at least weekly:

"*You do hear talk on the Internet of people becoming addicted to viewing the images, how do you supervise those who are looking at images would be the question, to make sure that they're not looking at them for you know, that they're not getting dragged into this, being sort of sexually aroused by it and then finding that they're getting caught up in that cycle".*

This appears to be an understandable concern for supervisors given that those arrested for downloading child sexual abuse images have included individuals from all walks of life including law enforcement (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006).

2.2.7. Work Environment

Any working environment will vary enormously depending on the role of an individual, and there appears to be little research on the most appropriate environment for those who are required to view on-line child abuse as part of their respective daily role. Robert and Hockey (2000) have, however, highlighted the importance of an appropriate working environment, and emphasised the significance of a balance between external work goals, and internal or personal goals if work stressors are to be reduced. Here male participant R.3: explains his personal frustration as he considered the possible impact of not succeeding in his work role:

"They (senior management) just do not understand the work involved in dealing with these cases, and that each case has to be individually assessed, because each case could have a child at the end of it".

A study by Kinjercki and Skrypnek (2006), explored the work environment and defined the emotional wellbeing or satisfaction at work as 'levels of spirit' (p 280), caused by a feeling of wellbeing, a sense of contribution through work, and a common purpose and connection to others. The result of their study suggested that this state was dependant on several factors within an organisation including a positive workspace culture and space where employees feel comfortable to focus upon their work. Interestingly six

participants, from differing agencies, commented on the disturbance that can be caused by external visitors, including participant R6:

"One of the senior, senior managers constantly walks through with visitors, and you know, whatever way we try to make the screens not visible as you come in the door, sometimes you know they, it can't be helped, to the point where I've had an argument with him".

Meanwhile, female participant R.12 explained in more detail, some of the distress external visitors can cause:

"We have had instances whereby you've had visitors from outside of the office, and the comments that they've made about the staff that are viewing material who'll just have walked behind (are) negative".

When asked, this participant expanded on the type of comments made as the following extract explains:

"*Basically they'll say there's the weirdo's down there looking at what they do, (…) the freaky people or- it's just because their work doesn't involve any of it, I suppose that might be their way of dealing what we're dealing with (…) they have actually called us sick".*

2.2.7.1. Workload

Workload was identified as a cause of concern by all participants but one. Several studies such as that by Jones and Bright (2001), suggest it is not workload, but the factors behind the workload such as volume, pace, and the conflicting demands of the job, and the control an employee has over the job that are likely to be the cause of distress.

These findings appear consistent with the examples given by the participants in this study such as this extract by male participant R.5:

"I take lots of phone calls, lots of phone calls from people telling me their job is the most important job in the entire world. And you know, there's a tremendous amount of conflict there with their requirements and our requirements here".

R.5: continued to explain the difficulties of role conflict in this following extract which focused on external factors also outside his control:

"Conflict resolution is probably the pick of the crop, trying to placate people, into making them understand, and that's not just within the organisation, the level of knowledge in the Crown Prosecution Service is dire. They have absolutely no concept as to how long things can take. Judges are even worse, they actually think just because a member of the judiciary says that something's got to be done, that we can actually physically do it, in the timeframe".

Meanwhile male participant R1 explained some of the concerns for those who supervise staff, in relation to workload:

"I've said, I can't, sustain this, it's not fair on them … certainly not fair on them, I mean yes they're in there ultimately, but you gotta have a work life balance, and at the moment, one of them, (X) hasn't got one".

Those in service group occupations such as nursing, teaching, and law enforcement are believed to be at higher risk of burnout, which is generally defined as emotional exhaustion, Kop *et al* (1999). Other recognised symptoms of burnout include depersonalisation, a negative and cynical attitude to the client group, and a lack of belief in personal accomplishments, with the cause of burnout identified as having a direct correlation to stress (Euwema *et al*, 2004). An experienced officer, male participant R.3, discussed his feelings of exhaustion, which he believes are directly related to inappropriate management:

"*Management have said things to me here like, 'Oh you can work the weekend if you want, if it will help'. Well actually it won't help because all that happens is we get tireder and tireder, the mountain stays the same and all we've done is tire ourselves out even more".*

The feelings he described are not dissimilar to those found in studies carried out by Kop, *et al* (1999), who established that lack of reciprocity at organisational and interpersonal levels, such as bad management, or uninterested supervisors were the highest indicator for burnout.

Kinjercki and Skrypnek, (2006), also stressed the importance of recognizing the contribution of the employee, and pointed out the importance of vocalising appreciation. While nine of the participants mentioned concern at the lack of value placed on the work of child abuse investigators, five of the participants believed there was a lack of motivation from senior management, such as this illustration from male participant R.9:

"*we don't get the motivation that I think we should do, a few words, that's all it takes. A few words at the right time at the right place, and it works a treat. And I don't think we get them (…) a few words from the powers that be"*.

2.2.7.2. Welfare Support

All twelve participants believed they had a responsibility to ensure the wellbeing of their staff, although male participant R1 explained that the responsibility for wellbeing does not only rest with the supervisor or manager of a unit:

" it's their responsibility as well psychologically if they're feeling stressed, and it's their colleagues responsibility as well to spot it from them, but ultimately it's my responsibility to insure that they're alright, and I try to do that as best I can".

Lack of control over resourcing, in particular staffing, and conflict with senior management was discussed by six of the participants. Four participants stated serious concerns over the lack of appropriate staffing resources, and the potential impact on the wellbeing of other staff, as discussed by male participant R.5:

"senior officers need to come, get out of their offices, and go and look and spend time with practitioners, spend time with investigators and actually experience what they're experiencing, for them to actually then go away, and think actually they do need to

have more money in there, they do need to have better welfare provision, and they do need more staff".

All participants believed welfare support was vital to this role, with eleven of the twelve participants stating the importance of professional welfare support. Eight participants believed their organisation, at least in part, followed the ACPO guidelines for investigators of child abuse on-line as suggested by Stevenson (2002). Occupational health departments were indicated as the area most likely to be responsible for welfare support, with five participants praising the efforts of their particular occupational health service. However, four participants believed welfare support was not considered a high priority by senior management, with one participant having particular difficulties with senior management in relation to resourcing these recommendations, as discussed below. (This participant requested that there was no identifying key to this statement)

"I don't think that the organisation has taken on it on at all, I can tell by the fact that they haven't given us the support, you know we had somebody resigning because they'd been taken to court for hitting their wife (that) was what eventually got us our psychological support (…)".

Female participant R8 also expressed concerns stating that:

"I don't think I should be paying for this (welfare support) out of our equipment budget, which is exactly where it's coming out of (…)I would like to see kind of a proper ACPO level response on this, that this isn't kind of an add- on, it's an inherent part of people's contract to work within this type of department you know, that they must be provided support".

2.2.7.3. Relationships between Colleagues

The importance of relationships with work colleagues is one which was considered by Kop, *et al* (1999) who suggested that 'relationships with colleagues have become a stronger detriment for effectiveness and satisfaction than relationships with superiors' due to the move by organisations towards the building of 'working teams' (p337).

While there was concern about the lack of understanding, and lack of appreciation at a senior level, all participants believed their specific department had a strong sense of community and shared identity as discussed here by male participant R.5:

"I think there are, there are good support networks within this group. People will look out for everybody else, and will say something if they're worried about what's happening, what's going on with them".

The importance of team relationships was also considered by Porteous, (1997, p282) who suggested that 'the main focus of teamwork is on cohesiveness and getting the right blend of people to work together'. But as Porteous explained, this requires an element of team maturity, with members being obliged to overcome interpersonal conflicts, and adapt to higher levels of tolerance.

While previous studies have considered aspects such as the impact of team size, and heterogeneity, within team conflict, it appears that results are inconclusive, although it does seem that a team which is collectively able to focus on the achievement of a greater goal rather a team where individuals are focused on an individual goal, is more likely to succeed, (Porteous, 1997). Again the comments made by the participants in this study appear to support the findings of previous studies as male participant R.9, explains:

"The other two guys I work with are fantastic we get on really, really well, it's a fantastic working environment.…….…… it's been a massive learning curve, so what we're doing it's resulted in us feeding off each other".

Ten of the participants had been involved in recruitment of new staff to their unit. Here the emphasis amongst experienced staff was far more likely to be on the personality of new recruitee's, than on their technical ability, as can be seen in the following comment by male participant R.5:

"Now we're not talking about being a forensic expert, we're not talking about them coming in here running. We're talking about them being the right person for a small group, because you may well be the most expert forensic analyst in the world, but if you

come in here with the wrong make-up, (…) that upsets group dynamics, I'd rather have someone with a lesser knowledge in computing, because they're going to be trained anyway".

The attitude of new staff to the viewing of child sexual abuses images was seen as particularly important by seven of the participants, as male participant R.7 explained:

"What I find worrying is when you say how do you think you would cope with that? Or, would you have any reservations?- (and they reply) 'No problem. Water off a duck's back. Seen it, done it'. Yeah, that to me would be possibly not the person that I would look to take on. I would look for an answer which says, well to be quite honest, no I've never come across it, and I won't know how I'm going to feel until I actually see it".

The concerns expressed by this participant are in line with the findings of Anderson et al (1995), who suggested that while there is considerable effort in preparing law enforcement officers for the physical strains of their role, there is little emphasis on the potentially emotional consequences of the role.

Other qualities participants considered vital for new staff included sociability and humour, and again forensic skills were seen as of a lesser importance than the ability to fit into the team as R.5 explained:

"Humour is hugely important and it is probably the thing that's the most understated. I would put that above computer skills, humour and good group mentality. Because you can train in computing".

While the idea of humour may appear at odds in an emotionally charged environment, the validity of humour was confirmed in a study by Biggam and Power, (1995) who found that humour was particularly of benefit to staff requiring positive coping strategies in order to respond to potentially stress inducing situations within their occupation. Biggam and Power also noted the high use of humour as a positive coping strategy amongst police officers, finding that officers with a strong sense of humour reported less occupational stress than those with a low sense of humour.

Finally there appeared to be an almost unanimous agreement that staff who were recruited into a unit viewing images of children being abused needed to have a maturity, certainly in outlook, if not in years. Male participant R.9 explained further using the example of a recent new recruit:

"He's very young (….) he's very young but he's mature, I just think you've got to be different, and maturity and common sense are I think, the key factors".

2.2.8. Diversity

As Lawthorn (2000) explained, research into the outcomes of legislation which has supported inclusive employment practices suggested organisations benefit from a diverse workforce, due to enhanced performance and a competitive advantage, but cautioned that for true inclusion to be achieved, the social, political, and historical context from which diversity has evolved will need to be honestly examined.

2.2.8.1. Gender

Age, or lack of it, was not the only area of diversity that participants touched upon when discussing the skills required by staff working in this area, with several participants mentioning the issue of gender:

R.11: "*Years ago, when we used to do the video interviewing of children, a lot of guys didn't want to do the video interviewing of children (saying) women can speak to children far better than them, and that wasn't the case. But you used to find a lot of the women officers suddenly ended up doing all the video interviewing, they'd then go home, be on their own picking over all these, these disclosures that they'd done"*.

This statement is confirmed by a review of practices carried out on the Metropolitan Police Service by the Equal opportunities Commission, which found that women were more likely to be given responsibility for crimes against women or young people, rather than assigned to roles such as public order duties (Silvestri, 2003).

Interestingly, during this study it appeared that the expectation of the role of women in this area of work would be equal to that of their male counterparts, with participants, in their roles as supervisors, supporting this, as female participant R.8: explained:

"We've got two women which is new. Actually funnily enough the men were kind of more, you know, what happens if they get exposed, I was like well, you know (…) they will get exposed(…)and that's the kind of conversation (with new staff) I have at the start".

2.2.8.2. Sexual Orientation

A further issue was that of sexual orientation, and how this might be perceived within this environment. Male participant R.6 explained his feelings on this subject:

"If I had to say, who was my best ever member of staff for bringing together investigative skills, caring skills, very methodical, it was a female, and I don't know if this is right to say this, but it was a female lesbian member of staff, who was great, and super-sensitive, and super- efficient, and super-caring, and super lots of things. But women I've found, were, (…) the best staff I've had".

I: "*Do you think that that impacts within a unit, if somebody is a lesbian or gay or homosexual"?*

R.6: "Dealing with this kind of work"?

I: "*yes"*

R.6: "*It's one of the falsehoods that I try to sort of allay when I'm dealing with it. I don't know everything about this work, but what I do know is there's certainly no greater danger in my opinion from people who are for example homosexual (…) If the Internet's giving us a true mirror image of what's going on behind closed doors it's mainly heterosexual men who are the danger in terms of being paedophiles".*

This observation by a senior, experienced officer is particularly interesting, given the apparently negative views of the general public and media that appear to undermine gay officers. A study by Burke (1994), found that nearly 78% of homosexual officers believed they would not have the same prospects as a heterosexual officer, and would not seek to join a specialist branch such as Special Branch or Royal Protection, assuming they would fail vetting procedures. Given the sensitive nature of investigating child sexual abuse it may be suggested that homosexual officers would also have concerns regarding this specialist area.

2.2.8.3. Religion

Another area of diversity discussed by male participant R.2, was that of upbringing due to religion or ethnicity:

(Talking about a new recruit) "She's a Muslim girl, and you know I got the impression she was from a really very sheltered existence, and sheltered, sheltered background so I thought we might have problems (…) but that shouldn't (count) against her and (we) try to work through that and deal with that".

Interestingly, while this participant's concerns stemmed from the possible sheltered upbringing of his new recruit given the role they would be undertaking, other problems can come from an ethnic recruit's community. Interviews with Muslim staff, including support staff, suggested that some Muslims felt a requirement to hide the fact that they work within law enforcement, fearing that they may be seen as 'enemies from within' by some within their own community (Police Review, 2006).

While this particular individual was not specifically recruited as a police officer, the issue of ethnicity remains an important issue for law enforcement, particularly given the drive for police forces to be seen as reflecting a true representation of their communities.

2.2.9. Management

A study by Hart and Cotton (2003) into occupational stress within the Australian Police clearly identified the need for enhanced leadership, and management styles, and better organisational structures such as appraisal, clarity of role and decision making styles, if the occupational wellbeing of staff was to be improved. Kinjercki and Skrypnek's (2006) findings also acknowledged the importance of leaders who are able to inspire and lead through example. Unfortunately, the lack of senior management understanding regarding the subject of child sexual abuse on-line investigation was highlighted as a problem by three of the participants, as discussed here by male participant R.3:

"Unfortunately some of the senior management have not worked in child protection before so they have a total lack of in-depth knowledge I think, of some of the issues that are involved".

As previously discussed there was a considerable difference in the roles of the participants, partly regarding the amount of exposure to the images, but also with regard to the level of the managerial requirement within their role, and this appeared to have a direct impact on which part of the role the participants found most stressful.

Three participants indicated that they were responsible for more than one department, and in one case the child abuse computer forensics unit had been added to the participant's responsibilities almost as an afterthought, even though as he explains below, the participant R1, had no previous experience in this area of work:

I: *Can you give me an idea about how you came to work in this area?*

R.1: *I came into Intelligence to take charge of the Telecomms and Internet crime and mobile phone crime unit, the computer forensic unit at that time were in a transitional period and they decided that they would give me that department as well.*
I: *Did you have any previous experience of this (area) at all?*

R.1: *none at all.*

While all the participants had a least a minimal management role, nine of the participants expressed dissatisfaction with senior management, while three participants expressed concern about their own ability to achieve within their management role. Managers at a more senior level appeared to find their management role particularly stressful, with the two most senior managers both identifying work overload as the main culprit, as discussed in an extract from a male participant R.1:

"I attempt to go over to them every day,(but) that doesn't happen (..) not very good, I know, not very supportive, unfortunately it's the BEST I can do (…) I don't support them as much as I'd like"

Male participant R2, agreed, and discussed the problems he found as a supervisor and the way he attempted to resolve them below:

"You know some 3 months ago they were getting on together brilliantly, they were united, against a common enemy which was me!(…) Now I've made that extra effort and I spend more time with them, and I benefit from that, and they benefit from that (…) and I've got fantastic relationships with most of them at the moment. Now we have this meeting every week and make sure it happens and that's good. We're moving forward a lot".

Meanwhile staff in supervisory roles at the other end of the spectrum, had frustrations of another kind. Often these participants were working in a 'hands on' capacity while also supervising new members of staff, and their view of the hierarchy responsible for implementing child abuse units was uncomfortably negative as male participant R.3 explains:

"The whole structure set up has been woefully under resourced and I can only presume that people involved in the planning at a higher level, didn't really understand what it is we do, and the resources that we needed.…….".

Four participants also expressed the view that their role included protecting their team or unit from politics at strategic management level, with male participant R.5 stating that:

" *my major role in here is shouldering the rubbish that can come down to the people that work in here, in a way delivering the message that motivates them but shield them away from all of the politics and the rubbish that that exists in every police service now. Shield them from it and protect them a bit so all they've got to concentrate on is their work".*

In 2003, Mr John Grieve, Ex Commander of the Metropolitan Police Force stated that, "Of all the wider policing tasks for the twenty–first century, nothing could be more important than the protection of children" (MacVean, and Spindler, 2003, p. 5). However, when participants were asked what were the things that they would most like to see change within this environment, seven of the participants indicated the value placed on their work at a strategic and senior level, as discussed here by R1:

"the big thing for me is the senior command team understanding that the public want paedophiles to be punished. We are playing at it, we are not supporting the public, and supporting the police officers, and supporting these paedophiles appropriately, we have such limited resources, such poor backlogs".

Six of the participants believe that the perceived lack of value given to this area of work is due to lack of understanding at senior level. Here male participant R6, considers one way in which this might be overcome:

"I don't think people should see material or hear material without some justification for doing so, or reason for doing so within their role, but seeing it and even understanding what it is we're dealing with, might benefit a few people, (…) if you're going to be, you know, a lead in management, you need to understand and appreciate some of the smaller cogs and what we're actually dealing with"

Finally, male participant R.5: believes that management at the highest level must intervene if this area of work is to be successful.

We direct investigations for major inquiries and yet we're not on a list of protected services within the police, and I think that's shameful, until we get that recognition then it may well be the case that there is a perception that ACPO don't take us seriously.

3. Discussion

A review of the literature relating to the role of units dealing with child sexual abuse on the Intranet identified that both organisational factors, and compassionate fatigue type factors have particular relevance when considering the possibility of occupational stress in this area of work. It would also appear that the making, and sharing, of images of children being sexually abuse is increasing across the world. Whether accessing newsgroups or utilizing Web based bulletin boards, individuals are now easily able to move across international boundaries (Jenkins, 2001), suggesting that the requirement for similar roles as those performed by participants in this study will increase.

A review of the literature relating to occupational stress found that many of the findings relating to organisational stressors within this study are remarkably similar to those of previous studies, such as those by Toch (2002) which suggested that administration, lack of input into decision making, and management style were common occupational stressors within law enforcement. Worryingly, a major study into stress within law enforcement as long ago as 1983 had also found similar results, suggesting that little has changed in twenty years. In her study Manolais (1983) identified four major sources of stress, management systems, management style, management support, and traumatic incidents, with particular emphasis put on management style such as unjust criticism, lack of counselling skills, unrealistic expectations, lack of concern for individuals, lack of communication, and excessive autocracy/lack of consultation.

Of particular concern to participants taking part in this study was the apparent lack of awareness, or value for staff, from senior management. A comment made to a male participant by his line manager exemplified this apparent lack of value:

"A Superintendent said to me "I don't want see that", and I said well, when investigating this child, it's evidence, you need to see it. "I know, I know but I've got kids. "Well, so what, you know, so have I got kids… I found that (comment) unacceptable"

Comparisons between this study and previous studies carried out in the law enforcement environment identified similar problems of conflict between workload, and external factors outside of individual control, such as those described by Harkness, et al, (2005). Meanwhile, lack of control over workload has consistently been identified as an issue for those working within child sexual abuse units (Wright, Powell, and Ridge, 2006), and was highlighted as a significant concern to participants in this study, particularly in relation to aspects of the legal process. Participants were also frustrated by the apparent lack of appropriate resourcing, while the emotional content of the cases increased individual anxiety regarding the importance of succeeding.

Wider literature studies which consider the implication of compassionate fatigue type stressors such as those by Figley (1995) and Steed and Downing (1998), also indicate the probability of consistencies between previous findings and this study.

While the results of this study had some findings similar to that of Wright, Powell, and Ridge (2006), which suggested that those viewing images of children being abused have identified coping strategies that allow an element of desensitisation, some participants indicted difficulty with certain aspects of this role. In particular, although coping with the viewing of images, some participants indicated difficulties when also being required to *listen* the sound of children being abused. Furthermore, while previous recommendations from Stevenson's (2002) study have now became part of Centrex Guidance for staff investigating child abuse on line, and have been implemented in many units, some participants still struggled to have staff welfare support agreed by senior management.

This was rather suprising given that the concept of welfare therapy is now well supported by previous studies (Brown et al, 1999; Patterson, 2003). Certainly a study by Follette et al (1994), carried out on a combination of mental health, and law enforcement professionals, working with child sexual abuse survivors, noted that mental health professionals had significantly lower levels of general psychological distress than law enforcement professionals. Follette et al concluded that this was due in part to the high number of mental health professionals participating in some form of supportive therapy (59.1%) against the low numbers of law enforcement professionals participating in supportive therapy (15.6%).

It is acknowledged that there are limitations to the findings within this study. While the researcher made every effort to include participants of different ages, gender, experiences and organisations, it is accepted that given the small sample size, the fact that all participants were white British, and the fact that this was a qualitative study, the findings from this research are not necessarily universal to all supervisors working in this area. Nevertheless the experiences of these participants' are likely to give an indication of the problems other supervisors in this area may encounter, while findings from this study suggest there are particular areas of concern regarding the impact of viewing child abuse images that have not been considered within previous studies.

The impact of external visitors to the workplace caused particular concern to participants, and in some cases negative and inappropriate comments were responsible for unnecessary distress. Given the recommendations of previous studies such as those by Kinjercki and Skrypnek, (2006), who explained that collaborative and supportive working relationships can enhance the effectiveness within the working environment, those responsible for deciding on the appropriateness of external visitors may wish to consider how external visits can be managed to reduce the possible impact on their staff.

A concern identified for male participants, was the implication, or fear, of sexually responding to child sexual abuse images. While there appears to be little research that considers the possibility, or reality, of the problems this may cause, the fact that this is a cause of concern to staff should be noted, and individuals given the opportunity to discuss their fears with appropriate, and professionally trained, staff.

Further concerns regarding viewing of sexual images related to the possibility of staff with paedophilic tendencies being recruited to units investigating child sexual abuse.

While Taylor and Quale (2003) acknowledge that there can be no one profile to fit all offenders, recent studies have identified a generic profile of offenders, namely that offenders will often be in a relationship, be employed, have no criminal record, and have an above average IQ (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006). This profile could potentially fit many candidates applying to a unit investigating child abuse on line therefore, while it remains a sensitive and complex issue, this is an area that may

benefit from further research aimed at reducing the possibility of staff with paedophilic tendencies from successfully applying to work in this environment.

It is accepted that an appropriate psychological assessment would be extremely difficult to establish. While, as Taylor and Quale (2003) explain, tools such as phallometric testing, and visual reaction time are occasionally considered to assess the likelihood of re-offending amongst known child sex offenders, understandably, it would be neither appropriate, nor ethical, that the use of such assessment tools could, or would, be considered for those applying to work in a child sexual abuse unit. However other areas of research might successfully support the construction of an appropriate assessment process.

There is also the possibility of this area of work affecting relationships external to the workplace, such as family and friends. The relationship between stress, law enforcement officers, their work, and their families, has been the subject of several studies (Anderson et al, 1995; He et, al, 2002). The findings from these studies suggest that while the causes of stress between the law enforcement officer and their social structure can vary considerably, a negative impact will potentially lead to officers leaving law enforcement. Given the likely increase in this specialist area of work; it is recommended that consideration should be given to the possible impact of this work on those relationships external to the workplace.

While there is little understanding of the long-term implications of this work, Dyregrov (1995) has previously suggested traumatic reactions from regular and long term exposure to traumatised children can develop over time rather than immediately following the exposure. Several studies have also suggested caution at employing staff who have themselves been sexually abused, into units investigating child sexual abuse (Stevens and Higgins, 2002; Follette et al, 1994). There was however, no evidence of a monitoring process for staff currently working in this area, or consideration of the length of time staff had worked in this environment. There also appeared to be a lack of consistency or uniformity in the manner in which new staff, or those who view child abuse images intermittently, are trained to respond to, or protected from, the possibility of emotional distress.

Supervisors appeared to have been given little advice or training regarding the welfare support of new staff joining child sexual abuse units, while resources to implement welfare support could be unforthcoming. Although this situation may be due to the relatively new emergence of this area of law enforcement, it would appear prudent for those at senior management level to consider a uniformed approach to the issue of training for new staff joining child abuse units, as well as an appropriate, and consistent approach to the continued welfare support of those staff already in place.

In conclusion, it appears that those working within units that view child sexual abuse, acknowledge and accept that this can be an emotionally impactive role, however participants taking part in this study clearly believe this does not negate the responsibility of senior management to consider and reduce, the potential for emotional harm by better understanding the welfare issues that staff may face.

Given the findings of this study, those responsible at a strategic level, may wish to consider management of such units in more depth.

In particular, appropriate resourcing and staffing of these units must remain a priority, with the findings of this study supporting the implementation of a welfare monitoring process for all staff viewing child sexual abuse on-line; a training programme for all supervisors, aimed at heightening awareness and understanding of potential welfare issues amongst staff; and clear guidelines on welfare provision, combined with the appropriate resource support from senior management.

Senior management may also wish to consider, and respond to, the perception that there is a lack of understanding, awareness, knowledge, and concern, from those at strategic management level regarding the role of those viewing, and listening, to images of children being sexually abused.

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Appendix 1.

Recommended Guidelines.

Law Enforcement Agencies

- All law enforcement agencies with staff, who view child abuse images on the Internet, should ensure that a policy, or guidelines, are in place identifying how this role, and the individual, should be managed. This should be easily accessible to all staff. Line managers, in particular, should refer to these guidelines when a new member of staff is being considered.

- Individuals moving into the field of viewing child abuse images should be treated as dedicated staff in a manner similar to firearm officers or undercover officers.

  Staff should volunteer for a role in this area, and should not be given this role purely as a matter of course.

- All staff must be fully briefed by managers beforehand, for the role they are about to undertake. The briefing should include specific knowledge of the type of images that will be viewed.

- All staff should be given a 'health warning' prior to taking up a post in this area. This should be carried out by an appropriate professional with experience/training in this area, and should be relevant to the subject matter the individual will be required to view.

- Law enforcement agencies should consider whether psychological profiling should be used when filling these posts. In the current climate, organisations require the best possible advice regarding the suitability of officers wishing to work in this area, although it must also be accepted that no system is completely safe.

- Where no psychological profiling is in place, pre-employment health assessments should be followed up with specific role assessments for officers/staff wishing to work in this area.

- A counselling/support service ***must*** be made available for staff working in this area. Staff should be given details of how the counselling/support service operates, and the procedure within their organisation before taking up their post.

  For example, is the service?

  a) Mandatory (and number of sessions they will be expected to attend?)
  b) Optional?
  c) A combination of mandatory and optional

- The recommendations regarding counselling support, based on the findings of this study is that one mandatory counselling session should take place before any

officer/support staff takes up position. This should be followed up by, at least, annual mandatory sessions, with optional counselling available at any time.

We are aware that some officers are reluctant to undertake mandatory counselling, and would suggest that these recommendations be made a pre-requisite of an officer taking up his/her post.

- Consideration should be given to an 'off site' and independent counselling support resource.

- Information explaining how to contact the counselling /support service should be given to all staff prior to them taking up post. Any organisational literature, such as guidance leaflets, should also be made available at this time.

- Particular consideration should be given to briefing line-managers and supervisors. Managers of staff viewing child abuse images should be made aware of the need for 'time out' and should also have awareness of the signs and symptoms of work-related stress in this area. (See 'Managing staff viewing child abuse images')

  The National Crime Squad is in the process of developing an information leaflet for staff. This has been based on a leaflet recently produced by Surrey Police Occupational Health Department and we would like to express our thanks to Surrey for sharing their information on this subject with us.

- Staff should have an exit debriefing when leaving this arena. They should also be allowed continued access to the counselling/support service in the organisation for a specified time, we recommend a minimum of six months.

Occupational Health Departments

- Law enforcement agencies should be aware of the constraints of their Occupational Health resources, and consider whether the growth in the requirement for counselling support systems requires further staffing resources.

- Occupational Health Departments may wish to identify how they can improve the lines of communication with welfare officers, if such staff are not part of their department.

- Occupational Health Departments should be made aware of the roles within the organisation that may have an impact on the health or welfare of the staff. This should be achieved by consultation with department heads and line managers.

Appendix 2.

Interview Schedule

This has been broken down into two groups of questions. The first group of questions concentrate on the individual, their personal experiences, and their own fit into the working environment, whilst the second group of questions concentrate on the individual as a supervisor/manager of the team.

1. Can you tell me how you came to work in this area?

2. Can you tell me about the environment you work in? i.e. number of staff, structure, and physical environment?

3. Can you describe the nature of your work i.e. typical day, your role?

4. Are, or have you ever, been required to see/heard images of children through your role?

5. If so, can you describe the content of the images? Age of child, activity undertaken. Others individuals in the image?

6. Is there anything in any images of children you have seen that has disturbed/distressed you ?

7. Can you describe the type of reactions/emotions, if any; you have had to images/tapes of children?

8. Do you feel your reactions have changed over time, if so in what way and why?

9. Are there certain types of child images that cause a strong (er) reaction response from you? i.e., the age of child, violence, torture, rape?

10. Can you define what the term 'child abuse' means to you personally?

11. How would you define the term 'child' i.e. age?

12. Do you find *viewing* images of children any different to *hearing* tapes of children? If so, in what way?

13. Do you think viewing child images has affected your behaviour with children? If so how?

14. Do you think viewing child images has affected your behaviour sexually? If so how?

15. Can you explain the process of selecting a member of staff to your team i.e. Where would you advertise for staff? How would applications be processed? What type of skills/ traits do you personally feel staff require?

16. Do you have any type of 'profiling' for posts in this area of work, and if so do you know when within the recruitment process, would this be carried out?

17. Can you describe how new staff joining your team, are given details of the type of images they may see/hear?

18. What do you personally believe your responsibilities are for the welfare of staff in your team?

19. As a supervisor, how often are members of your team likely to view/hear images?

20. As a supervisor, do you know if viewing child images has ever impacted on your team, or individual members of your team?

21. Can you explain the type of welfare provision if any, that is available to staff with the team?

22. In relation to the well-being of you/your staff, what are the things that you would most like to see changed ?

23. Is there anything that you would like to tell me about that has not been covered in this interview?

*Profiling-Some sensitive posts within Law Enforcement are now psychologically profiled by a clinical psychologist to identify the type of personalities best/least suited to the role

Appendix 3.

Classification: unclassified

Dear all

As you may be aware, three years ago at the request of the ACPO for Computer Crimes, I carried out a study into the emotional impact of viewing child abuse images on the Internet. Following the recommendations made in this study, I have been requested to carry out a further study, which will predominantly, but not exclusively, consider the impact of this work on supervisors and team leaders.

As you are aware, no study of this kind can be carried out without input from those involved in this area of work, therefore I am hoping that staff I have met, either at Wybostons Computer Crime courses, or at similar events, or who have shown an interest in the first study, will consider taking part in this second study.

If you do not feel able to take part yourself, but have a colleague working in this area and who you believe may be interested in taking part, I would be very grateful if you could forward this email to them.

I have enclosed an information leaflet and consent form, which explain how the study will be carried out, and I would be grateful if you would take time to view these and contact me should you have any questions.

If you are able to take part please do let me know some dates that you would be avalible for interview, and which area of the Country you will prefer the interview to take place.

<<Consent Form- Research study 1 .doc>> <<Information leaflet for Research Paper 1 .doc>>

My sincere thanks for your time

Jane

Jane Stevenson
Occupational Health and Welfare Manager
Mobile Number 07771506690

Appendix 4.

Consent Form
Middlesex University/Bramshill Research Paper.

Researcher: Jane Stevenson.
Tel 07771506690
Occupational Health & Welfare Department
PO Box 8000
London
SE11 5EN

Please ensure you read the information leaflet that accompanies this form and discuss any questions you may have with the researcher. Please answer the following questions before signing this form.

Have you read the information leaflet about this study?	Yes /No
Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about this study?	Yes /No
Have you had satisfactory answers to any questions you had?	Yes /No
Have you received enough information about this study?	Yes /No
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time, without giving a reason for withdrawing?	Yes /No
Do you understand that confidentiality will be maintained **except** in the case of answers which suggest a serious, and significant, risk of harm to yourself or to others?	Yes /No
Do you understand that if you decide to withdraw from this study, this would in no way affect your normal SOCA counselling provision?	Yes /No
Do you understand that short **anonymous** extracts from your interview may be published in academic articles?	Yes /No
Do you agree to take part in this study?	Yes /No

Signed …… Dated ……

Printed name ……..

Appendix 4.

Information leaflet.

Identifying Support and Welfare Guidelines for Supervisors and Investigators into On -line Images of Children.

- Background

I am carrying out the following research as part of my MSc in Applied Psychology at Middlesex University, and also on behalf of the Home Office, and would like to invite you to take part in this study.

The number of investigations into paedophilia rings utilising 'on line' images of children, has increased dramatically given the wide spread use of the Internet. However little is known about the impact of this area of work on the investigators who are required to view, and listen to, vast quantities of images for evidence. This research aims to explore the impact of this work, and to review current methods of supporting staff working in this area, to better understand the welfare needs of staff.

- Research Process

The process will involve a semi-structured one-to-one interview by me, which will be carried out at a location and time convenient to you. The interview should take no longer the one and a half hours, and you may refuse to answer questions, or withdraw from the interview at any point. If you would like to see a copy of the interview questions in advance, I would be happy to show these to you.

The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure clarity; however all participants will remain anonymous, with each participant being given an interview number.

Complete confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study other than in the case of answers which suggest a serious, and significant, risk of harm to the participant, or to any other individual.

Consent forms, which are required to include the participant's name, will be held separately to the interview transcriptions, and tapes, to ensure anonymity. Only the interviewer (myself) will have access to both consent forms and interview information.

You will also be asked to fill in a short questionnaire which will ask about your age, length of service etc. These will also be anonymous and will not require you to give your name.

The interviews will be transcribed by a security cleared SOCA administrator, with the participant's number being the only form of identification. All tapes and written information will be securely stored. Some of your comments may be included in the research report or academic article, but if so they will remain anonymous, with participants being given a false name, and any identifying details changed.

Participants may withdraw from the interview process at any time and are not required to give a reason for their withdrawal. Participants may also withdraw their interview statements at any point up to the end of the study.

Following the interviews, all participants will be offered the opportunity to attend a one to one session with a clinical psychologist, if there are issues you wish to discuss.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study please discuss these with myself, before signing the consent form.

This research has been approved by the ethics committee at Middlesex University and agreed by the National Centre for Policing Excellence, Centrex.

Finally, may I offer my sincere thanks for your interest in this study!

Jane Stevenson
Head of SOCA Occupational Health and Welfare

Telephone 07771506690

PO Box 8000
London
SE11 5EN

Appendix 5.

Psychology Curriculum Group

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

No study may proceed until this form has been signed by an authorised person, indicating that ethical approval has been granted.

This form should be accompanied by any other relevant materials, (e.g. a copy of the research protocol, questionnaire to be employed, letters to participants/institutions, advertisements or recruiting materials, information sheet for participants[1], consent form[2], or other.)

Name of investigators: Jane Stevenson

Title of study: Identifying support and welfare guidelines for Investigators and Supervisors, viewing disturbing images of children

1. Please give a brief description of the nature of the study, including details of the procedure to be employed. Identify the ethical issues involved, particularly in relation to the treatment/experiences of participants, session length, procedures, stimuli, responses, data collection, and the storage and reporting of data.

This is a qualitative study, in which I will interview approximately 10-15 experienced investigators and supervisors working on 'on-line' child abuse cases, and who have worked in this area for a minimum of 1 year. Consenting participants will be interviewed about their training, current role, supervision, and support, and their views regarding any welfare provision. Each interview will take approximately one hour, and will be tape-recorded. All tapes, and transcripts, will be securely stored.

Interview data will be transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis. Participants will be given pseudonyms, and any identifying factors will be removed to ensure anonymity.

All participants will also be given a short questionnaire to collect biographical data (see attached)

2. Could any of the procedures that you are proposing to adopt result in any adverse reactions? NO
If "yes", what precautionary steps are to be taken?

Precautionary steps which will be taken to combat this:

3. Will any form of deception be involved that raises ethical issues? NO

4. If participants other than Middlesex University students are to be involved, where do you intend to recruit them?

From past attendees at NSLEC law enforcement courses, and the UK 'On Line' Child Exploitation Unit (CEOP)

5. Does the study involve

Clinical populations	NO
Children (under 16 years)	NO
Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental health problems, learning disabilities, prisoners, elderly, young offenders?	NO

6. How, and from whom, will informed consent be obtained (see *consent guidelines*[2])?

Informed consent will be obtained from all of those who volunteers who take part in the study – they will be asked to sign a consent form before taking part in the study, after reading the information letter (see attached).

7. Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty (*see consent guidelines*[2]) YES

This is explicitly stated in the consent form (attached) and will also be mentioned at the beginning of all the interviews

8. Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase (*see debriefing guidelines*[3])
The debriefing will be verbal, however all participants will also be offered the opportunity to see a counselling psychologist for a one to one debriefing session.
YES

9. Will an opportunity exist to discuss the study with the participants to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions? YES

If "yes", how do you propose to deal with such problems?

A list of specialist help lines will be made available to volunteers. Contact details of an independent clinical psychologist who has agreed to offer support, and contact details of the researcher will also be provided on all documentation given to the volunteers, and it will be made clear that volunteers will be able to ask any questions that they might have before, during and after the interviews.

10. Under the Data Protection Act, information about a participant is confidential Unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will confidentiality be guaranteed?
YES

If "yes", how will this be assured? If "no", how will participants be warned?

Information obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews will only be seen by the researcher named above; it will be kept in special security cabinets double

locked, and will be destroyed once the project has been completed, analysed and written up.

The information given to volunteers prior to their involvement in the study explicitly states that all information will be kept securely and will be confidential and any personal information will be changed when the study is written up for publication. The consent form (attached) requires volunteers to indicate that they understand and agree to the fact that 'short anonymous extracts from [their] interviews may be published in academic articles'.

(NB: You are not at liberty to publish material taken from your work with individuals without the prior agreement of those individuals).

11. Are there any ethical issues which concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form? YES

If "yes" please specify:

Ensuring that only experienced staff working in this area are involved in this study.

This will be addressed by only interviewing staff who have been trained in this area of work, and who have worked in this area for a minimum of one year

(NB: If "yes" has been responded to any of questions 2,3,5,11 or "no" to any of questions 7-10, a full explanation of the reason should be provided on a separate sheet, and submitted with this form).

I have read the British Psychological Society's *Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human participants*[4] and believe this proposal to conform with them.

Researcher: **Jane Stevenson** date **27/09/06**

Signatures of approval:

Supervisor……. date ……..

Ethics Committee……. date ……..
(approval granted for the study to proceed)

[1,2,3,4] Guidelines are available from the Ethics page of SOCNET

Appendix 6.

Support for Staff Viewing Images of Children Personnel Questionnaire

Please fill out the following confidential questionnaire. This will be held separately to your interview transcript:

1. *Please enter your initials for administrative purposes*

2. *What is your date of birth?*

3. *To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong? (Please tick <u>one</u>)*

<u>Asian or Asian British</u>

□ Indian

□ Pakistani

□ Bangladeshi

□ Chinese

□ Any other Asian background
Please give

details……

<u>Black or Black British</u>

□ Caribbean

□ African

□ Any other Black background
Please give

details……

<u>Mixed</u>

□ White and Black Caribbean

□ White and Black African

□ White and Asian

□ Any other Mixed background
Please give

details……

<u>Other ethnic group</u>

□ Any other ethnic group

Please give details ……

<u>White</u>

□ White British

□ White Irish

□ Any other White background
Please give

details……

4. Which of the following groups work with?

I work within Law Enforcement ☐

I work within a Government Agency ☐

I work within a NGO/Charity ☐

Other – please give details ☐

5. What is your highest educational qualification achieved or currently in progress?

(Please tick <u>one</u>)

O level/GCSE or equivalent ☐ Undergraduate degree (e.g. BSc/BA) ☐

A level or equivalent ☐ Postgraduate degree (e.g. MSc/PhD) ☐

HNC/HND/GNVQ ☐ None of the above ☐

Other – please give details ☐

6. How long has your work involved viewing child images?

1 year ☐

Between 1 and 3 years ☐

Between 3 and 5 years ☐

Between 5 and 8 years ☐

More than 8 years ☐

7. What is your current relationship/family status?

(Please tick <u>one</u>)

I am married, with children ☐

I am divorced/separated, with children ☐

I am married, without children ☐

I am divorced/separated, without children ☐

I am single, with children ☐

I am single, without children ☐

I live with a partner, we have children ☐

I live with a partner, we do not have children ☐

Other – please give details