

Institution: University of Plymouth		
Unit of Assessment: UoA20		
Title of case study: Transforming approaches to online safety: embedding an ethos of empowerment and support into safeguarding policy, legislation, and practice		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Andy Phippen	Professor of Social Responsibility in IT	01/09/01 – 22/01/20
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01.08.2013 – 31.12.2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Professor Phippen has mobilised findings from his research on how children and young people use digital technologies to significantly improve online safety for children throughout the UK and in other national contexts. Phippen has achieved this by embedding an ethos that prioritises the empowerment of children and young people through education and the establishment of positive support mechanisms within changes to national policy and statutory inspection, in changes to safeguarding practices in educational and other child-centred contexts and by directly engaging with an estimated 20,000+ children, 10,000+ members of the child workforce, and 5000+ parents. In addition, Phippen's research has underpinned the establishment of legislation and support for victims of so-called 'revenge porn'. The recognition of revenge porn as a crime means that thousands who have been subject to this form of abuse have been able to access expert advice, have damaging images removed, and to seek justice.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The key aims of Prof Phippen's research have been to establish an evidence base through which to understand how children and young people use digital technologies, and to critique safeguarding policy and legislation in this area. In so doing, he identifies how these tools of government and law could be made significantly more effective at protecting the safety of children and young people when they go online. Specifically, Phippen's research seeks to create evidence on children and young people's understanding of the opportunities and dangers afforded by the internet, of the relationship between online safeguarding and the consequences of this for their rights to use the internet, and the ways in which safeguarding policies and legislation play out for safety in practice. This is not a single project with rigidly defined aims, but an ongoing ethnography underpinned by the collection and analysis of large-scale quantitative survey data undertaken for charities who educate and advocate for children and young people. Phippen contextualises this with analysis of the policy and legal frameworks on interconnected but diverse topics such as teen sexting, revenge pornography, and young people's use of pornography. The ethnographic component draws on data from extensive engaged research with children and young people in schools (discussion groups, workshops, interviews), and talks and workshops with NGOs, the children's workforce, and those in the policy space. It is through this engaged approach to research that Phippen has been able to deliver impact directly to a large number of the children, young people, parents, and members of the children's workforce (see section 4). Phippen uses these research-interactions to share his research findings and analysis in a way that is relevant to participants.</p>		

Specifically, Phippen (3.1) established the concept of an “online safeguarding dystopia” where, in a rush to apply adultist agendas from policy makers and children’s workforce professionals to tackling online safety risks, children’s rights are eroded and the idea of ‘safety’ is an unachieved façade, rather than a meaningful reality. His research finds that this gap between legislation and practice has been brought about due to the development of policy without fair consideration of the evidence base, the capabilities of technology or the rights of children and young people (3.1, 3.2, and 3.3), and is predominantly formed in the context of reactive lobbying. This has been coupled with a lack of education of the children’s workforce (e.g., teachers, teaching assistants, social workers) about what legislation in this area means and how they can best support children and young people to be safer in their online behaviours (3.1, 3.3).

The main outcomes of these safeguarding failings have been two-fold. First, they result in children and young people experiencing the safeguarding of their online activity as a form of soft-criminalisation, rather than as a supporting and trusting space (3.1, 3.2, 3.4, and 3.5). This means that rather than perceiving adults at school, home, out of school activities etc. as supportive of them when they encounter problems or potential dangers, children and young people understand they will be punished for the consequences of anything that might be illegal (e.g., sexting and viewing pornography). Consequently, they often do not seek help when they need it (3.1, 3.2, and 3.3). Second, a dystopian vision of digital safeguarding at school and in the home, places young people in a position where their behaviours and communications are filtered, monitored and tracked. Not only does this equate to the significant neglect of children’s rights, but it also fails to teach them how to be safe online. It makes them either docile children who are compliant with restrictions without establishing their own understanding of how to manage and mitigate their own online risk, or devious children who hide their potentially harmful online behaviours from caregivers, without an opportunity for education and intervention (3.1 and 3.3).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 Phippen, A. (2017) *Children’s Online Behaviour and Safety Policy and Rights Challenges*. Palgrave. Repository Type: dspace <http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/10704>
- 3.2 Gray, SL, and Phippen, A. (2017) *Invisibly Blighted: The Digital Erosion of Childhood*. UCL Institute of Education Press. Repository Type: dspace <http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/10702>
- 3.3 Phippen, A. and Brennan, M. (2019) *Child Protection and Safeguarding Technologies*. Routledge.

These peer-reviewed outputs have been supplemented by peer-reviewed practitioner reports , including:

- 3.4 Phippen, A. (2012) *Sexting: an exploration of practices, attitudes and influences*. London: NSPCC.
- 3.5 Bond, E. and Phippen, A. (2019) *Police Response to Youth Offending Around the Generation and Distribution of Indecent Images of Children and its Implications*. Research conducted for the Marie Collins Foundation. Spring 2019.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Professor Phippen has significantly improved the safety of children and young people online throughout the UK and other national contexts through extensive in-depth stakeholder engagement at all levels of the impact pathway (direct engagement with children, capacity building with parents and the children’s workforce, and significant contributions to policymaker and public discourse, and government policy and legislation). Through these engagements, Phippen has articulated the findings from his research on how children and young people use digital technologies. This has led to the development of an established approach for safeguarding policies, regulation, and practices that is about creating empowering spaces for children and young people to go online. The methodology involves developing a knowledge of

children and young people, and of those safeguarding them, about what safe online practices are, and providing the means to implement appropriate policies and support mechanisms in the current legal and technological context. Phippen has also translated these findings into other aspects of digital safety, leading to legal protections and support services for victims of so-called 'Revenge Porn'.

Improving safeguarding practices and cultures in children's spaces

Phippen has improved the safeguarding of children online by changing the way in which those with direct responsibility for this (school governing bodies, the children's workforce and parents) understand and practice safeguarding. One way in which he has achieved this is through leading the commissioned SWGfL annual review of data from their *360 degree safe tool*, every year since it was available in 2011. By 2020, this was well established as the leading self-review tool, used by 15,000 schools (responsible for an estimated 5 million children) in the UK [5.1]. The availability of this data not only provides schools with the ability to benchmark against best practice but, as the Director of SWGfL states, is '*used by SWGfL as a main source of data on current online safeguarding practice within schools nationally, and...has strongly influenced our strategy as an NGO, shaping the rest of our services and activities*' [5.1]. This includes SWGfL addressing a weakness in training provision that Phippen identified in the data review and led to them developing their training offer to schools, *Online Safety Live*. This is a programme of e-safety events designed exclusively for professionals working with children and young people which, from 2015 to the end of 2020, have been delivered to over 22,000 professionals, collectively responsible for approximately 4.5 million young people [5.1].

Phippen has also been directly engaged in developing two training toolkits for the children's workforce (including teachers, social workers, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement officials). He wrote elements of the Farrer's Peer on Peer Abuse Toolkit in 2019 [5.2] which was promoted in the DfE guidance *Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges* for school and academy leaders (May 2018). The toolkit was also sent to approximately 3000 people on the Farrer's Safeguarding Unit's mailing list (spanning a broad range of sectors, including charity, sport, and religious organisations) [5.2]. In addition, he led and co-wrote the Headstart Cornwall commissioned *Online Resilience Tool* in 2019-20 [5.3]. Phippen has also delivered training to an estimated 10,000+ members of the children's workforce and 5000+ parents between August 2013 and July 2020 [5.4]. The toolkits and training are designed to ensure that adults with safeguarding responsibilities: a) understand how children and young people use digital technology; b) are equipped to support children and young people, particularly when they are exposed to risk and harm; and c) are able to create an informed and non-judgemental culture within children's spaces (schools, sports and other clubs, youth groups, etc.). In addition, they include practical actions to keep children safe (e.g., through reporting and the removal of harmful material). Evidence of practice change and the embedding of the principles is seen in the data from the 2020 SWGfL 360 degree annual review '*which shows Whole School approaches being far stronger than they were ten years ago, and the vast majority of schools now [have] strong policies that underpin online safety practice in the schools*' [5.5].

Empowering children and young people to be safe online

In addition to changing safeguarding practices, Phippen also works directly with children to help them understand the risks of going online and how to respond to harms without this impacting on their rights and legislative protections. Between August 2013 and July 2020, Phippen has led online safety sessions with an estimated 20,000+ children (aged 4-18) in schools throughout the South West and other parts of England [5.4], to help them: to develop their critical thinking around online behaviours and risk; to understand their rights and how they can become resilient to harm; and to provide them with a forum to develop their knowledge around their online rights and responsibilities.

For example, since opening in 2017, Phippen has worked with over 1000 young people aged 16-18 at Callywith College, to develop their knowledge of digital rights and legislation. The Headteacher writes '*He discusses online safety with students, listening to their concerns and answering their questions, creating a space where they are able to be open and ask frank*

questions, knowing they will get an honest and supportive response' [5.6]. David Wright (Director of SWGfL) also testifies to this in the foreword to Phippen (2016) '*most importantly, [Phippen] speaks to children, a lot. And not just to deliver 'information' sessions, but sitting with them, working with them, answering their questions, and most importantly listening to them*'. Some Callywith students worked with Phippen to develop the *Headstart* toolkit and this subsequently led to them creating a film (July 2020) with the BBC, giving advice for staying safe online [5.6]. He has also provided advice to students on a 1-2-1 level to help prevent them from risk, such as '*advising and reassuring a student who was being blackmailed for money online, at risk to his reputation and future prospects. The student was able to deal with the incident with appropriate support from the Police and those responsible for his welfare, to achieve a positive outcome.*' [5.6]

Improving child online safety through changing national policy, regulation, and shaping national and international discourse

Phippen has drawn on the evidence base from his research to effect change to national policy and national policy instruments for child online safeguarding in the UK, as well as contributing to national discourse and the terms of debate in this area.

a) Establishing the national co-ordination of online safeguarding through the inclusion of 'online safety' within statutory guidance and instruments

In 2012, Phippen's commissioned review of the SWGfL self-review data showed that both the online safety training of staff and governors in schools and colleges, and recording and monitoring of online safety incidents, were poor. The SWGfL fed these findings into government guidance and OFSTED reviews, which led to the inclusion of online safety within OFSTED inspector's briefing from 2012 onwards, and within the Department for Education's statutory *Keeping Children Safe in Education* guidance from 2016 onwards [5.1 & 5.7]. These changes have improved the national coordination of training for those in the children's workforce, by enhancing statutory instruments (i.e. schools inspection) to ensure the implementation of national policy in practice, the roll out of which has been supported by Phippen's contribution to the materials for OFSTED inspectors in online safeguarding [5.1, 5.7, 5.8]; three of the 13 questions of the OFSTED *Inspecting e-Safety: Briefing for Section 5 Inspection*, used by all inspectors throughout the impact period, are directly attributed to Phippen's report, published by SWGfL [5.8]. Together, the briefing and the 2016 statutory guidance make online training for staff, governing bodies and proprietors a statutory and regulated requirement for all schools and colleges educating those under the age of 18.

b) Shaped discourse, debate and legislation on how to safeguard children online

Phippen is actively engaged in national discourse about keeping children safe online, providing evidence for legislation and lobbying by NGOs, helping to shape national policy debate and understanding away from reactive criminalisation of children towards effective methods of safeguarding. In the impact period, Phippen has provided written evidence directly to Government including the Ministry of Justice; the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, who cite him in their Digital Economy Bill Briefing Paper 2016 [5.9]; POST (who cite Phippen in POSTNOTE Number 608 July 2019), as well as to statutory bodies (including OFSTED and the BBFC). Phippen has also provided NGOs with research-based evidence for lobbying Government (including the UK Safer Internet Centre, the Open Rights Group, the Marie Collins Foundation, and Netsafe New Zealand). Recently co-produced reports include *Young People, Internet Use and Wellbeing* with the SWGfL, and *Young People and Sexting – Attitudes and Behaviours* - a cross country comparison around young people's attitudes to teen sexting with SWGfL, the Office of the Australian eSafety Commissioner and Netsafe New Zealand. Phippen is also repeatedly invited to present his research at national industry and policy events, for example, speaking at Interpol's 2017 Crimes Against Children conference, sharing knowledge on teen sexting and youth produced sexual images to law enforcement professionals in over 30 countries.

Phippen also contributes to national public discourse, frequently being quoted in the UK national media, including on age verification, the use of technology by children, and the MOMO challenge (e.g., The Guardian (30/12/19), The Times (13/1/18), the Daily Mail (4/2/16), the Sun (2/2/15),

the i, (6/12/19) and Forbes (30/10/19)) [5.4]. This coverage is significant as a catalyst for change, primarily through influencing stakeholders such as parents and teachers in thinking about how they approach conversations with young people and how to reflect upon their own attitudes towards child online behaviours.

Enhancing legislation and support for victims of ‘Revenge Porn’

Phippen’s research has directly influenced the enhancement of legal protections and support services available to victims of ‘revenge porn’. Revenge porn is the colloquial term often used to refer to the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and other media. Phippen worked with campaigner Laura Higgins to provide evidence to successfully lobby UK Parliament for the inclusion of so-called Revenge Porn as a sexual offence in section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act (2015). Higgins said *‘[Phippen’s] pioneering work on sexting provided an evidence base through which we were able to show that image based abuse was real and problematic, and created the basis for...the campaign that led to a change in legislation.’* [5.10]

Alongside and in conjunction with the new legislation, Phippen worked with Higgins on the evidence to underpin the establishment of the Revenge Porn helpline in 2015 – both the case for setting it up, and to win funding for it from the Home Office. Phippen’s research provided *‘the evidence to obtain funding and support to set up a helpline for those affected by this crime... It helped us understand that it was not being taken seriously as a form of abuse, and reflects the revictimisation that occurs through judgement both on social media channels and also with some stakeholders... The work Andy has done on image-based abuse from 2009 onwards allowed us to make a case that this is a modern day phenomenon that affects many people’s lives and there is much judgement and victim blaming, strongly making a case for the need to support victims’* [5.10]. From 2015 to the end of December 2020 the Revenge Porn Helpline helped over 8,500 people who have contacted it seeking support and advice for cases of intimate image abuse, and over 92% of the content it reported on behalf of client had been removed [5.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Testimonial, David Wright, Director of UK Safer Internet Centre, SWGfL
- 5.2 Testimonial, Adele Eastman, Senior Counsel, Farrer & Co’s Safeguarding Unit Farrers *Peer-on-Peer Abuse Toolkit*, 2019. <https://www.farrer.co.uk/globalassets/clients-and-sectors/safeguarding/farrer--co-safeguarding-peer-on-peer-abuse-toolkit-2019.pdf>
- 5.3 Headstart Kernow *Online Digital Resilience Tool* and Podcasts <https://www.headstartkernow.org.uk/digital-resilience/> - article outlining its development: Phippen, A. and Street, L. *Understanding Digital Behaviours and Risk in Young People – Developing the Headstart Kernow Online Resilience Tool* (<https://www.headstartkernow.org.uk/Digital/Understanding%20Digital%20Behaviours%20and%20Risk%20in%20Young%20People%20Final.pdf>)
- 5.4 Details of talks to children, parents, and professionals; media coverage.
- 5.5 Phippen, A. and Bond, E. *UK Schools Online Safety Policy and Practice Assessment 2020: Annual Analysis of 360 Degree Safe Self-Review Data*, SWGfL, February 2020
- 5.6 Testimonial, Principle, Callywith College, Cornwall.
- 5.7 Department for Education, *Keeping children safe in education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
- 5.8 OFSTED, *Inspecting e-Safety: Briefing for Section 5 Inspection*. January 2013 <https://www.eani.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/OFSTED%20-%20Inspecting%20e-safety.pdf>
- 5.9 Booth, L. and Rathbourne, D (2016) BRIEFING PAPER, Number CBP 7699, 9 September 2016, Digital Economy Bill [Bill No 45 of 2016-17] House of Commons Library
- 5.10 Testimonial, Laura Higgins, founder and previously manager of the Revenge Porn Helpline.