

Witness Name: Susie Hargreaves OBE
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits:
Dated: 31/08/2018

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of Susie Hargreaves OBE, Chief Executive of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

I, Susie Hargreaves OBE, will say as follows;

1 Background:

- 1.1 In 1996 the Metropolitan Police alerted the Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA) that some newsgroup content being carried by UK Internet Service Providers (ISPs) could be classified as indecent images of children (IIOC). The Police believed that this may have constituted a publication offence under the Protection of Children Act (1978) (England and Wales). Efforts were then made to find a way to combat the hosting of such content in the UK whilst protecting the internet industry from being held criminally liable for providing access to the content.
- 1.2 Following discussions between the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police and some ISPs and the Safety Net Foundation (Dawe Charitable trust) an R3 Safety Net Agreement regarding rating, reporting and responsibility was created by ISPA, LINX (the London Internet Exchange) and the Safety Net Foundation. A key outcome of this agreement was the formation of the Internet Watch Foundation in 1996.
- 1.3 The IWF was set up to fulfil an independent role in receiving, assessing and tracing public complaints about child sexual abuse content on the internet and to support the development of website rating systems. Since being established in 1996 the IWF has been operating a hotline service to the public to report potentially criminal content and has been issuing "takedown notices" to UK ISPs in partnership with the police in order that the content can be removed.
- 1.4 In the first year of its operation the IWF processed 1,291 reports and had five members. A policy board was created in January 1997 to address the rating proposals in the R3 agreement. In this first year, the IWF created the Internet Content Rating Programme for Europe (INCORE) organisation as a partnership of European organisations concerned with internet rating and regulation issues. When the IWF was founded 18% of the world's known Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) was hosted in the United Kingdom. Thanks to the work of the IWF and its partnership, self-regulatory

all IWF staff work a shorter seven-hour day, however, further support is offered to analysts to ensure their wellbeing isn't being adversely affected by enforcing compulsory breaks for ten minutes in every hour while completing certain tasks.

- 2.17 The IWF believes a work-life balance is crucial. With the work our analysts do, the organisation hires people with a good support network in their lives, whether it is parents, partners, siblings, or friends we believe these supportive relationships should be nurtured.
- 2.18 As part of the excellent welfare package, analysts are given monthly mandatory counselling sessions and an annual psychological assessment. The 2017 Independent Inspection Report [IWF000017] of the IWF said that long serving hotline staff felt the counselling service was 'exceptional.' The report read: "indeed those in the team with the requisite experience thought that the standard was exceptional. In particular, we were impressed by the manner in which arrangements were sensitive to the needs of individual workers."
- 2.19 Due to the nature of the work, the offices are separated into two parts for (i) those on the IWF hotline who have access to criminal content and (ii) for other members of staff who don't. There are also regular away days for staff to socialise, have fun time, and relax away from the stresses of work. A copy of the IWF staff welfare policy [IWF000011] has been provided.
- 2.20 When recruiting and training analysts, there is a particularly lengthy process to ensure that the IWF recruits the right people who are able to cope with the reports and searching that take place in the hotline. Firstly, candidates have a personal interview, this is to ensure that they are well supported in their home life and have a good support network. If applicants pass this stage, they are then given a more formal interview with the Hotline Manager and Chief Operations Officer. This part of the process tests their analytical skills and ability to process large amounts of information and focuses more on the skills required of an analyst to do the job. If they pass this stage they are then offered the job subject to an image viewing session. This usually takes place on a Friday and candidates are taken through a range of imagery from legal to illegal, the lowest threshold of illegal child sexual abuse imagery, (Category C) to the highest threshold (Category A), and then back down again. They are then given the weekend to consider whether they still feel this a job that they can cope with and also over the course of the weekend have access to full counselling support if they have had issues with something they have seen. Finally, if they are still willing to accept, the only hurdle left to get through is an enhanced DBS check before the final offer of employment is confirmed. Once the candidate starts, it takes them around six months to get fully up to speed with the hotline operation and before they have full exposure to the range of images that the hotline team deals with on a day to day basis.

3 Funding:

- 3.1 As previously mentioned, 90% of the IWF's funding comes directly from the internet industry.
- 3.2 The other 10% of funding comes from the European Commission and its Safer Internet Programme as part of a package of funding awarded to the UK Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC), a joint venture between the IWF and two other charities Childnet International and South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL). Collectively UKSIC provides a Hotline (IWF), Awareness Raising for schools (Childnet and SWGfL) and a helpline for professionals (SWGfL).