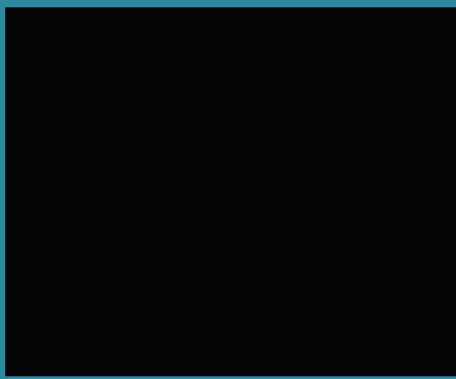


Revenge Porn
Helpline

Evaluation of the Pilot Project

March 2016

Emma Bond & Cristian Dogaru

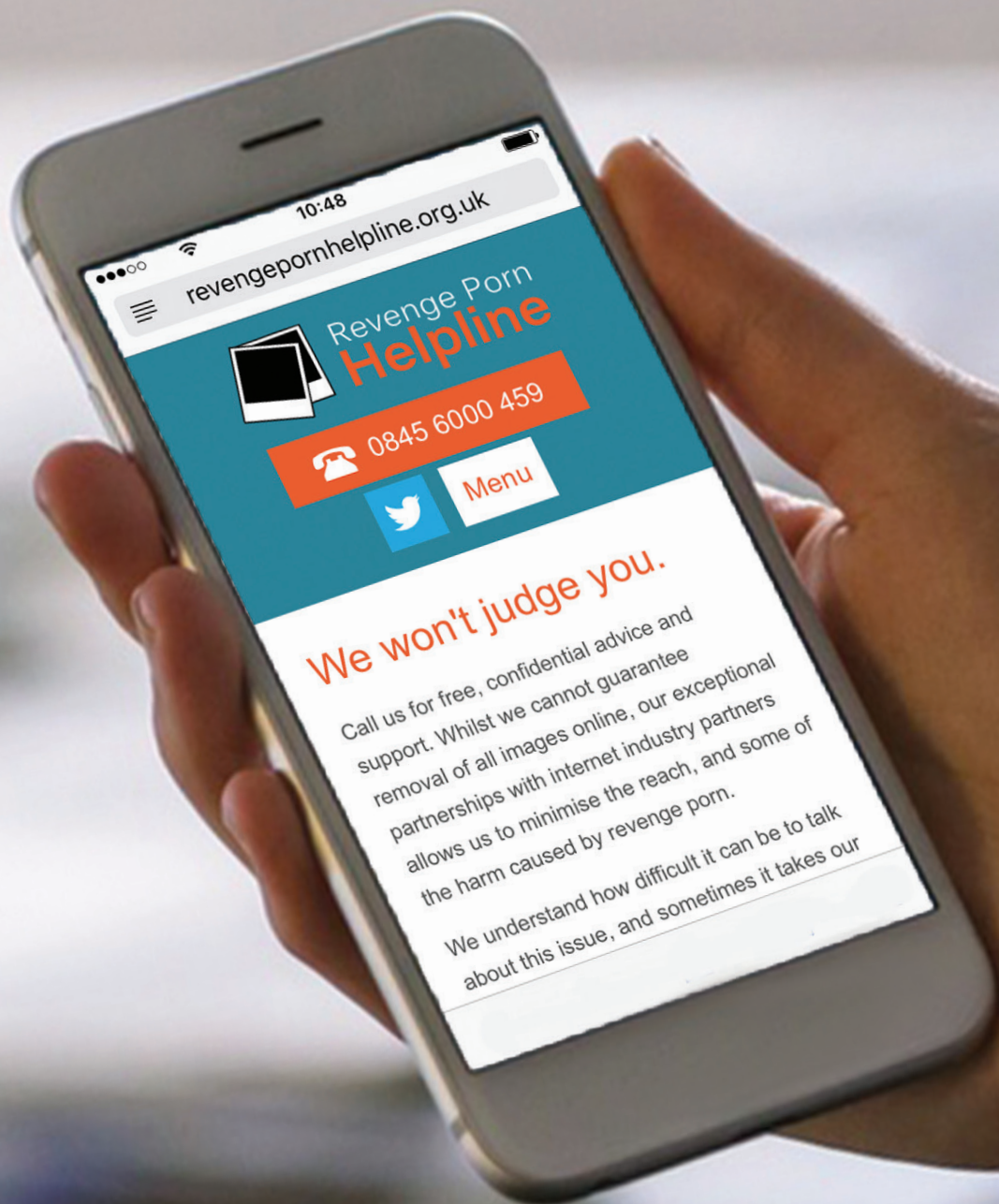


Government
Equalities Office



University
of Suffolk

“ This is just a very quick note to say Thank You. I mean it from the bottom of my heart . I will do all I can within my power to try to put this behind me. If I do come across what has been posted or I challenge anyone harassing me and find out what has been said about me, then I will take your advice and contact the Police or yourselves. You provide a first class service. ”



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- The Government Equalities Office for funding and supporting the service throughout.
- South West Grid for Learning Trust for hosting the project.
- Dr. Cristian Dogaru and Dr. Emma Bond for providing analysis of the helpline and Dr. Emma Bond for writing the evaluation.
- Stakeholders, Industry and other partners, without you we couldn't be so effective.
- Legal Advice Centre and the SPITE (Sharing and Publishing Images to Embarrass) Project who have provided top class free legal advice to our staff and clients since we launched. We are all very grateful for your help and friendship.
- Our clients. We are deeply sorry that you needed us, but we hope we helped you through the hard times.
- Above all, the team who helped set up, promote & operate the service. Without your passion, motivation, understanding and occasional anger we wouldn't be here. Thank you.



"Twitter is delighted to have partnered with South West Grid for Learning for several years. The service that their "Revenge Porn Helpline" provides to victims of non-consensual sharing of their images is ground breaking and we are delighted that the team have been able to use their expertise to help us ensure we keep users safe on our platform. They are founding members of Twitter's Trust and Safety Council and we look forward to working with them for many years to come." //

- Nick Pickles, Twitter Public Policy Team





3. Introduction

Coinciding with the introduction of new legislation in the UK to protect victims of revenge pornography by law, the Revenge Pornography Helpline was set up in February 2015 to provide advice, support and practical help for victims.

The Helpline, funded by the Government Equalities Office, is hosted by the South West Grid for Learning, who also provide the well-established Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH) which offers support with all aspects of digital and online issues for professionals working with children and young people. At the time of the evaluation (February – March, 2016) the Revenge Pornography Helpline had been contacted nearly 4,000 times and helped over 650 unique individuals between February 2015 and March 2016 to whom they offered individualised support and advice and provided practical help in trying to get online images and videos removed from websites and a variety of social media.

Revenge pornography

The affordances and interoperability of mobile internet technologies has enabled the easy photographing and filming of both the self – the selfie – and others in previously private spaces which can be quickly made public at a click or the touch of a screen. Whilst sexting has attracted considerable academic¹ and political attention, to date there is little research on revenge pornography. There is, however, increasing evidence that it is a rapidly escalating phenomenon with extremely distressing and often devastating personal consequences. Often there can also be professional consequences as people have had to leave their job because of embarrassment after photos have been shared or because they are frightened by a threat that images will be published.

It is important to remember that revenge pornography is, more often than not, domestic abuse. The actual number of people affected is very hard to quantify because of the embarrassment, humiliation and fear that victims experience and, like domestic abuse, the majority of cases remain unreported. Furthermore, due to the proliferation of dedicated revenge pornography sites and the unprecedented number and variety of social media platforms and personal mobile applications, the actual number of these types of images and abusive behaviours is impossible to even attempt to estimate. Where the image(s) and video content are originally posted is not always the main issue in tackling the problem as, even though the image(s) or video(s) can be removed, they can remain searchable and, therefore, still exist on search engines like Google. This is especially so if the image has been tagged or associated with a person's name².

There is an increasing body of evidence which demonstrates the psychological consequences of revenge pornography and the devastating impact it can have on a victim's emotional and mental wellbeing. Furthermore, the 'posting revealing photos of nonconsenting others along with identifying information potentially leads to humiliation and embarrassment and could increase the potential for online and "real-life" harassment³.

¹Livingstone, S. and Gorzig, A. (2012) "Sexting": The exchange of sexual messages online among European Youth in Livingstone, S., Haddon, L. and Gorzig A. (Eds.) *Children, risk and safety on the internet: Kids online in comparative perspective* pp. 151-164. Bristol: Polity

²The Google 'Right to be forgotten' initiative can, however, be helpful here as it remove specific results for queries that include their name, where the interests in those results appearing are outweighed by the person's privacy rights.

³Stroud, S. R. (2014) The Dark Side of the Online Self: A Pragmatist Critique of the Growing Plague of Revenge Porn in *Journal of Mass media Ethics*, Vol. 29 (3) pp. 168-183.

Legislation

Revenge pornography is defined by the Ministry of Justice as:

The “sharing of private, sexual materials, either photos or videos, of another person without their consent and with the purpose of causing embarrassment or distress”.

According to the Ministry of Justice the offence applies both online and offline and to images which are shared electronically or in a more traditional way. This includes the uploading of images on the internet, a social media site, sharing by text and e-mail, or showing someone a physical or electronic image⁴. However, it should be noted that the offence came into force on 13 April 2015 and can only be committed if the disclosure took place on or after this date. The legal implications of sexting, more commonly associated with young people⁵, are more established. Yet, in spite of anti-sexting campaigns over the last five years making it likely that most adolescents are aware of the potential severe legal consequences of sexting, they are still choosing to produce them⁶. Sexting behaviours in relation to adults are, however, often overlooked in both media and policy discourses yet it is increasingly becoming a notable aspect of both romantic attachment and sexual attraction in contemporary adult relationships⁷.

According to the CPS⁸, revenge pornography is an offence under Section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 and carries a maximum sentence of 2 years’ imprisonment. According to an article published in The Guardian in October 2015, there were 175 cases of revenge pornography reported to the police in the first six months of the new law being introduced. Whilst cases of revenge pornography are beginning to be brought to court, victims are very often unaware that an image or a video has been posted of them. Sometimes images

are online for a considerable time before victims are aware of them. During that time images are often reposted to multiple sites or copied to other social media before the victim is able to report the image and request or attempt to get it removed. Many victims may also be unaware of the new legislation designed to protect them and that other aspects of legislation may also be helpful.

Other aspects of legislation include:

- Stalking and harassment offences under S2, S2a, S4, S4a of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.
- Sending a communication that is grossly offensive, indecent, obscene, menacing or false under Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003.
- Sending a communication that is grossly offensive, indecent, obscene, conveys a threat or is false, with intent to cause distress or anxiety, under Section 1 Malicious Communications Act 1988.
- Offences under Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 (where the image was taken before the subject turned 18).
- Coercion and control legislation introduced in December 2015⁹.
- Unauthorised access to computer material under Section 1 of the Computer Misuse Act 1990 (where the images have been obtained through computer hacking).
- Blackmail.

⁴ Ministry of Justice Revenge Porn the Facts https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405286/revenge-porn-factsheet.pdf

⁵ Bond, E. (2010) ‘The mobile phone = bike shed? Children, sex and mobile phones’ in *New Media & Society*, Vol. 13 no. 4 pp. 587-604.

⁶ Gregory, T. (2015) ‘Sexting and the politics of the image: when the invisible becomes visible in a consensus democracy.’ *Porn Studies*, Vol. 2 (4) pp. 342-355.

⁷ Weisskircha, R. S. and Delevib, R. (2011: p. 1697) ‘“Sexting” and adult romantic attachment’ in *Computers in Human Behavior* Volume 27, Issue 5, Pages 1697–1701

⁸ http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/revenge_pornography/

⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482528/Controlling_or_coercive_behaviour_-_statutory_guidance.pdf

Background to the Revenge Pornography Helpline

The Revenge Pornography Helpline was launched in February 2015 with the specific mandate of assisting and advising people who had been the victim of revenge pornography. The South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) Trust is a not-for-profit charitable trust providing schools and other establishments with safe, secure, managed and supported connectivity and associated services, learning technologies to improve outcomes, and the toolkit for being safer online. SWGfL is a world leader in online child safety, a founding member of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety as well as an advisor to Governments and the lead partner in the UK Safer Internet Centre.

The Revenge Pornography Helpline's vision is clearly articulated as:

"To support victims of non-consensual image sharing, to provide advice and signposting to relevant support, and where possible, assist in the removal of images and content."

The objectives of the Revenge Pornography Helpline are also clearly published in their policies as to:

- Provide a specialist helpline service providing advice, signposting, and mediation to ensure that victims access all options available including legal support and removal of content.

- Pilot proactively monitoring of UK victim content and using all channels to secure removal of images and personal information.
- Build on current relationships with the Internet Industry, social networks and Internet Service providers (ISP's) to ensure swift resolution of issues.
- Use SWGFLT role as lead of the Association of Mediation Services – AIMS (www.internetmediation.org) to provide International reach and support for victims outside the UK.
- To produce and disseminate a specialist resource for victims
- To source and provide an initial legal consultation for victims.
- To provide signposting to other relevant support organisations including Women's Aid, The National Stalking Helpline, Paladin, Broken Rainbow and others.



Thank you for replying, I've taken great comfort in your guidance and feel I can manage a little more today.





4. The Evaluation

This evaluation was funded by the Government Equalities Office and was undertaken by Dr. Emma Bond and Dr. Cristian Dogaru at University Campus Suffolk (UCS) during February and March 2016.

The evaluation team analysed the data recorded and held on the Revenge Pornography Helpline's Microsoft 365 database, including the email exchanges comprising nearly 4,000 emails and undertook a wider evaluation of the Helpline's online resources.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this evaluation is based on secondary data analysis. The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach and the team analysed both quantitative data from the phone logs, email records and website data collected and also the qualitative data from the email exchanges and policy documents provided by the Revenge Pornography Helpline. The evaluation also drew on a consideration of the wider impact and the awareness raising initiatives undertaken by the Helpline since was launched in February 2015. Due to the nature of the confidential service provided by the Revenge Pornography Helpline and the agreement that the Helpline has with its clients - that they will not be contacted by any third party - the evaluation team did not engage in any communication with the clients themselves. The evaluation process was subject to UCS Ethical approval and the data sharing agreement between UCS and the Revenge Pornography Helpline was subject to strict data protection procedures and protocols which ensured that confidentiality and the anonymity of the data was protected.

'When studying the revenge pornography sites themselves, one should refrain from producing pieces of textual evidence from posts and comments; this would be a way of reproducing specific harm from these sites'¹⁰. As such this report does not include any material either visual or text based which was published as revenge pornography from websites or social media. The data is presented in the form of tables and graphs and some anonymised verbatim quotes from emails, in which all identifying details have been removed, in order to illustrate the key findings presented in the report.

¹⁰ Stroud, S. R. (2014) The Dark Side of the Online Self: A Pragmatist Critique of the Growing Plague of Revenge Porn in *Journal of Mass media Ethics*, Vol. 29 (3) pp. 168-183.

5. Findings

Governance

The operational management of the Helpline is the responsibility of the Online Safety Operations Manager and calls to the Helpline are answered by the operations manager or by the two dedicated and experienced members of the Revenge Pornography Helpline staff. SWGfL works closely with its partners in the UK Safer Internet Centre to ensure areas of expertise are recognised and none of the staff working on the Helpline are delivering any clinical case work or counselling. The Revenge Pornography Helpline also operates under the guidance of an advisory board comprising of internal and external e-safety group members, law enforcement, education and social care. The Helpline is monitored continually and has been subject to built-in reporting to the Government Equalities Office team at regular points. This monitoring has included key performance indicators such as volume of calls, quality of response and advice and follow-up actions as well as numbers of contacts with specific groups of clients. There has also been continuing quality monitoring carried out by the Manager, who occasionally observes helpline staff taking calls to assess suitability of responses.

As an organisation the Revenge Pornography Helpline has a number of key policies in place which provide the cornerstones for effective and responsible governance. Drawing on the experience from the POSH, sound governance of the Revenge Pornography Helpline is maintained through specific policies and procedures to which all workers are expected to adhere. The Helpline operates according to clear guidelines which are contained in an operating guidelines document. The Helpline staff have a comprehensive programme of induction and training and are fully cognisant of the guidelines before taking on the responsibility of responding to callers. Drawing on the experience from POSH, sound governance of the Revenge Pornography Helpline is maintained through specific policies and procedures to which all workers are expected to adhere.

The key policies, which are reviewed annually, include:

- **Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy (includes data protection):** There is a robust confidentiality & information sharing policy in place. All the Helpline records are stored according to the Data Protection Act, and in line with SWGfL policies. The systems used are compliant with EU standards and undergo expert scrutiny. The Helpline does not hold any paper records of client details nor communications and no client details are passed to any third sector parties unless a child or vulnerable person is deemed to be at significant risk (in accordance with safeguarding procedures).
- **Safeguarding Young People Policy:** The Revenge Pornography Helpline operates within a protocol of strict confidentiality with a robust safeguarding framework. Reports of images or videos which are of, or which appear to be of, a person under 18 are immediately reported to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) or the Child Online Protection Centre (CEOP) for investigation and, whilst all calls are treated as confidential, should a child be deemed to be at risk of harm such concern would be reported to the appropriate authorities immediately.
- **Recruitment and Selection Policy:** This policy clearly states how positions are advertised with clear job descriptions and person specifications. The selection and interview process adheres to safer recruitment processes and staff are vetted using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
- **Complaints Policy:** There is a separate complaints procedure in place. It is anticipated that most complaints can be resolved informally, however, there is a clear escalation process in place should this be required. It is also important that it is recognised that at times, the Helpline may receive calls which are deemed inappropriate for a variety of reasons such as type of query, or because it is a vexatious, abusive or hoax call. In all cases, this will be recorded, monitored and where

appropriate may be passed to the Police. Staff are advised on how to deal with abusive callers and will be supported to terminate any that are inappropriate.

- Supervision Policy:** The welfare and emotional wellbeing of the Helpline staff is seen as fundamental to providing an effective and appropriately responsive service. To this end, regular supervision is offered to the Helpline staff regarding all operational matters. Additionally, all the Helpline staff receive regular clinical supervision from an external consultant. Such supervision allows staff to have the opportunity to discuss the impact of their work on their daily lives and to address any issues that may be of concern to them personally. The SWGfL, the host organisation for the Helpline, views such supervision as an essential requisite for ensuring that the staff are properly supported and demonstrates that the organisation takes its duty-of-care responsibilities very seriously.

to bring both political and public attention to revenge pornography. The Revenge Pornography Helpline also provides guidance to policy makers, internet industry and media in order to raise awareness of the issue. Whilst this evaluation focuses on the data available which relates to the Revenge Pornography Helpline it is essential to also consider the evidence of the wider impact that the Revenge Pornography Helpline has had to date.

The Revenge Pornography Helpline has worked extensively with policy makers and other agencies both in the UK and internationally, social media organisations, traditional media, third sector organisations and NGOs to raise awareness and provide factual information and advice. In the first year the Helpline staff were involved in over 100 media events including 34 regional, 58 national and 9 international events. These far reaching events included radio programmes and interviews (for example on various regional and national BBC channels), TV programmes (such as BBC, ITV and Channel 4), online and print media (The Independent, The Guardian, The Times and The Daily Telegraph). The Helpline was also involved in national and international conferences, roundtable/consultations and research projects. They have also contributed to numerous national and international events and policy forums including the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and Women's Aid; Domestic Violence forums.

Promoting the Helpline and Raising awareness

The Revenge Pornography Helpline has had a substantial impact on raising both public and political awareness and developed a number of educational resources, both physical and digital. The Helpline has also effectively engaged media, and worked in partnership with service providers,

Figure 1: Raising awareness and media activity in the first year

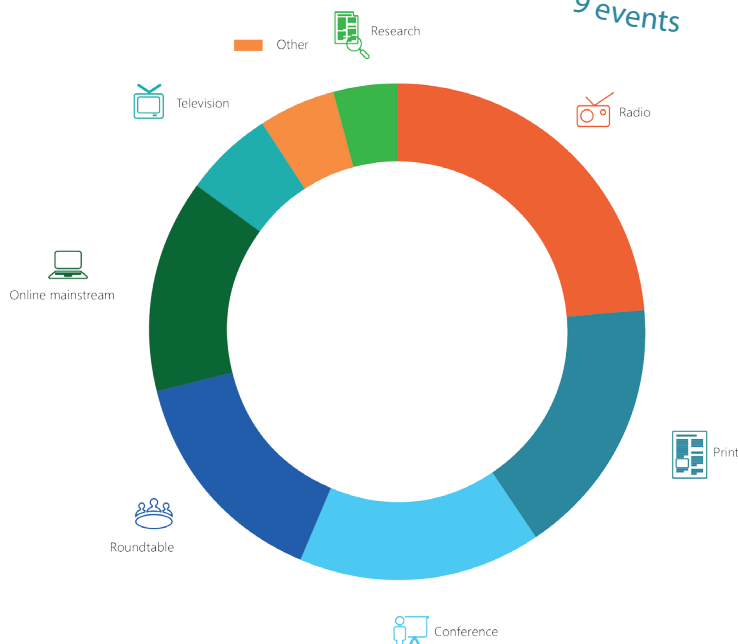


Figure 2: Media events geographical spread.

The Operations manager has been unstinting in her promotion of the Helpline and, with her team, has taken every opportunity to attend conferences, exhibitions, seminars and workshops to raise awareness in the UK. In addition, awareness raising materials in the form of 1,000 posters and 15,000 postcards were designed, produced and distributed at conferences, events and e-safety forums as well as via NGOs and third sector organisations.

The Revenge Pornography Helpline website

The Revenge Pornography Helpline website (<http://www.revengepornhelpline.org.uk/>) has had, since it was launched in February 2015, **in excess of 23,920 visitors to March 2016. The impact of this should not be underestimated.** The frequency of visits, notably the 'spikes', visible on the figure 3 are attributable to media coverage and awareness raising campaigns. The initial interest in the site, for example, coincides with the new law being introduced and the launch of the Helpline and the Ministry of Justice's Be

Aware B4U Share Campaign¹¹; the increased traffic in August 2015 coincides with the Channel 4 documentary on revenge pornography and most recently the very significant spike in February 2016 with Safer Internet Day. This suggests that these awareness raising activities and media coverage of the issue is highly effective.

The website is easy to locate on a simple search providing the three words - revenge; pornography and helpline are entered into the search engine. However, a search on revenge and pornography only does not bring the Helpline onto the first page. Searchers have to go to the forth page before the Helpline appears in a search. It may be worth considering how to increase the Helpline's visibility on search engines like Google using search engine optimisation. Once found, however, the website itself is easily navigable and has clear straightforward tabs to find information and advice. The website also has clear and direct links to other organisations that may be able to fulfil a supportive role for victims.

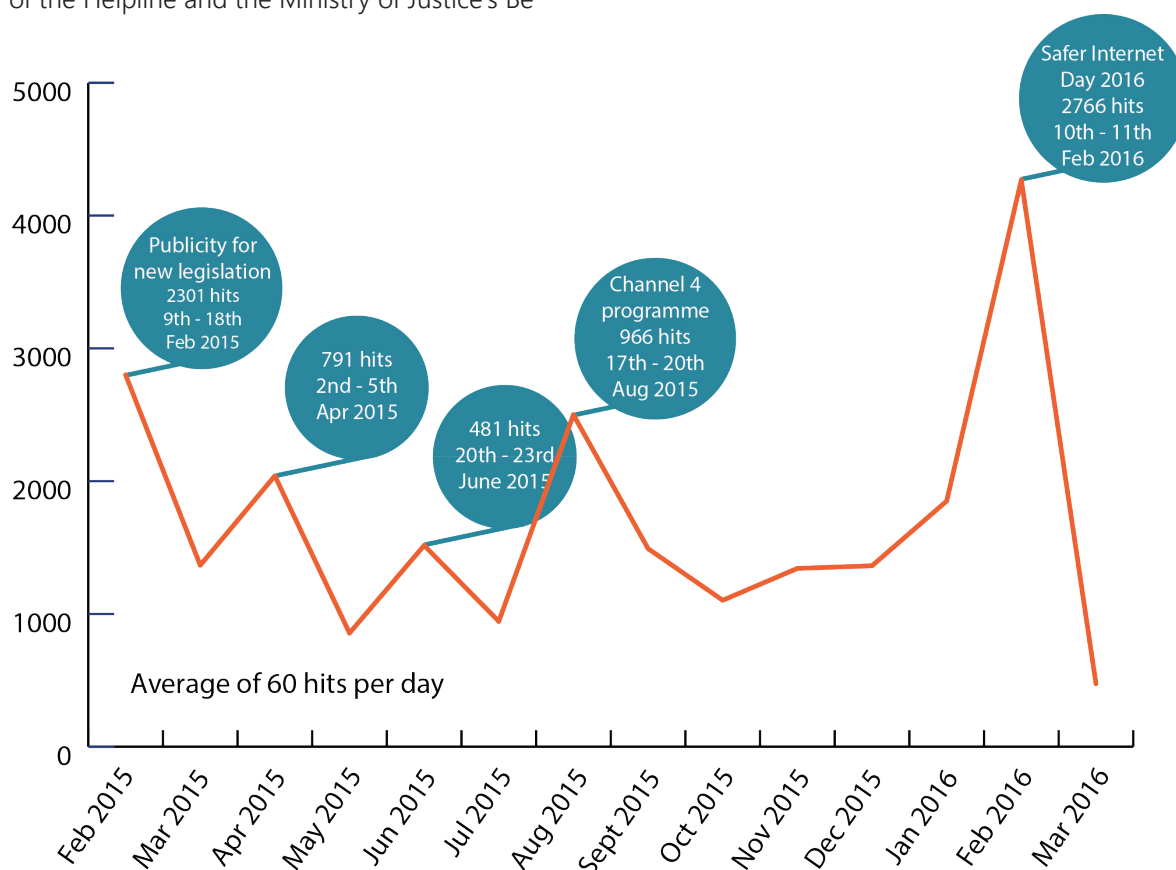


Figure 3: Revenge Pornography Helpline Website visitors.

¹¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/405286/revenge-porn-factsheet.pdf

The average number of visitors per day is 61 with an average duration of one minute per visitor. It is interesting to note that over 10% of visitors returned to the site subsequently (please see figure 5). Of the total number of visitors to the site, most visitors (almost 60%) come from the UK, followed by visitors from France (9%), the United States (5%), Malaysia (3%), Australia (2%), India (2%) and Germany (2%).

"We have been receiving an increasing number of reports about Anon-IB Board. We have had some success in reporting and taking down content that was reported to us. If you have issues with Anon-IB board, please can the depicted person provide us with a direct link to the content that is being reported, and we will do our best to help."

The Helpline also raises awareness of specific problems and issues. For example, due to an increasing number of reports to the Helpline (evidenced by the evaluation team in the email data analysis) of concerns related to Anon-IB¹², the Helpline has posted information of the website:

Figure 4: Location of Revenge Pornography Helpline website visitors.

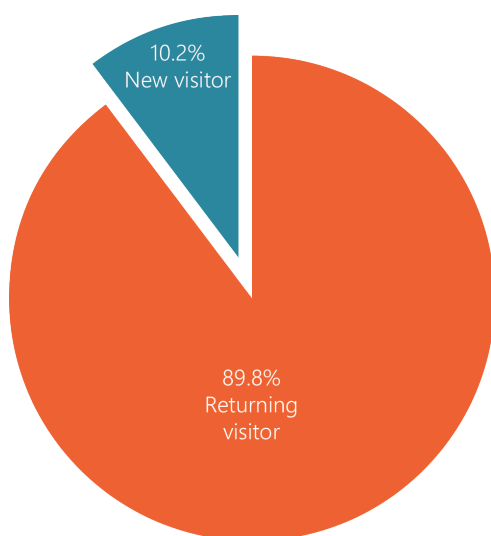
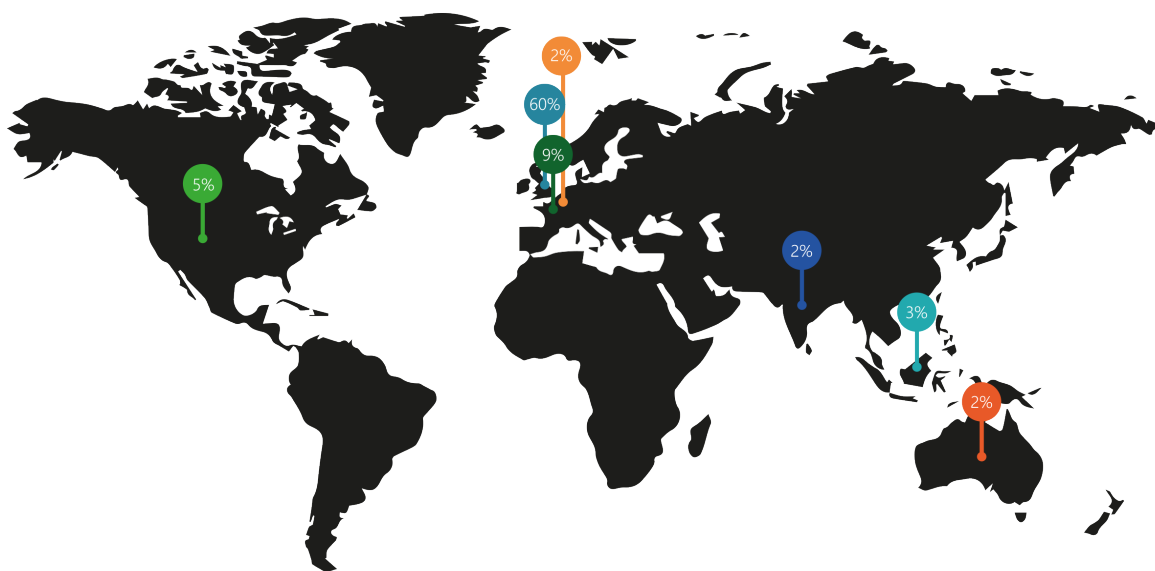


Figure 5: Revenge Pornography Helpline website new and returning visitors.

¹² Anon-IB is allows anonymous posting of images and most are of women naked or semi-naked and often unconscious. The images are degrading and many appear to be of underage girls

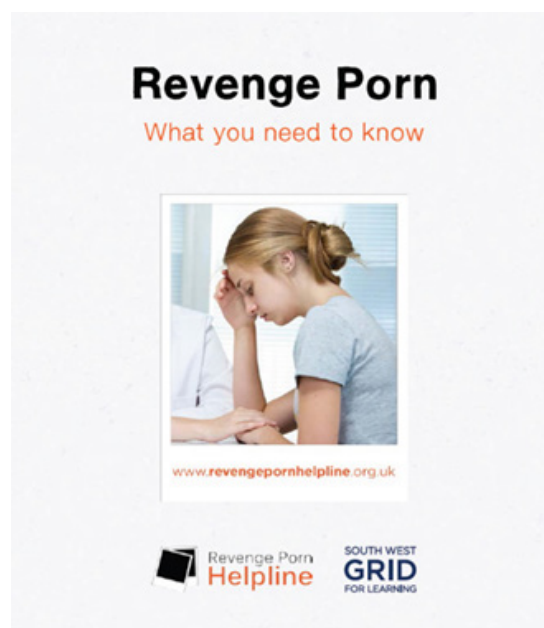
Leaflet – Revenge Porn What You Need to Know

Also located on the website is a downloadable leaflet 'Revenge Porn What you need to know' which provides information, explains the laws and what can be done to ameliorate the damage caused by revenge porn.

The leaflet has been viewed over 2,700 times and over 10% of these views were via a direct link to the leaflet rather than going via the Helpline's landing page. The leaflet is clearly laid out and has clear factual information on revenge pornography including:

- [legality](#);
- [how to report it](#);
- [examples of policy on revenge pornography from service providers and social media](#);
- [how to apply for an injunction](#);
- [moving on from revenge pornography](#);
- [details of other helpful services](#).

The leaflet also details how to get specific help from organisations like Facebook, Google and Twitter and provides links to other support agencies.



The Revenge Pornography Helpline on social media

The Revenge Pornography Helpline makes effective use of social media to raise awareness and promote the Helpline. For example, the Helpline's Twitter page @RPhelpline, has 1,490 followers, of which 63% are females. Most followers (70%) are from United Kingdom, followed by United States (14%), Australia (2%) and Ireland and India (each 1%).

During its very first month after launch, the @RPhelpline Twitter page had 554 profile visits, 65 mentions, and over 10,000 'impressions', a Twitter metric measuring exposure. During the last year the @RPhelpline Twitter account had on average 1822 profile visits, 130 new visitors, 54 mentions and 27,000 'impressions' per month.



Figure 6. Twitter analytics first month after launch (February 2015).

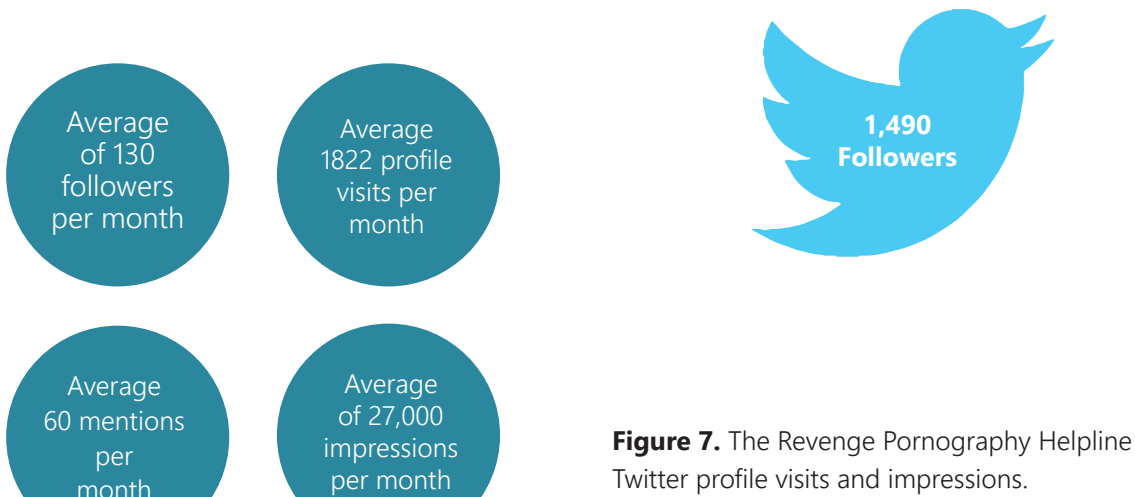
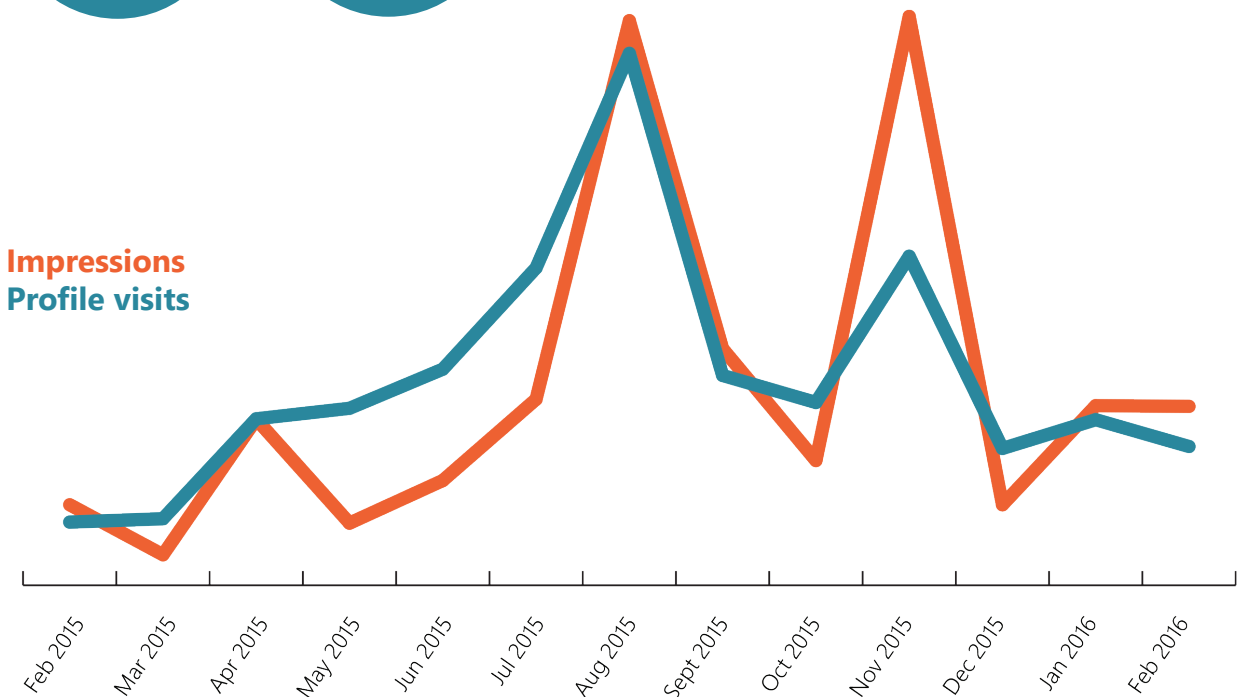


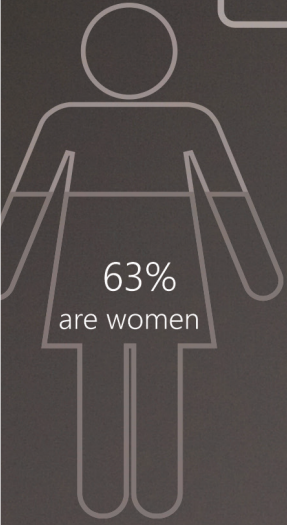
Figure 7. The Revenge Pornography Helpline Twitter profile visits and impressions.



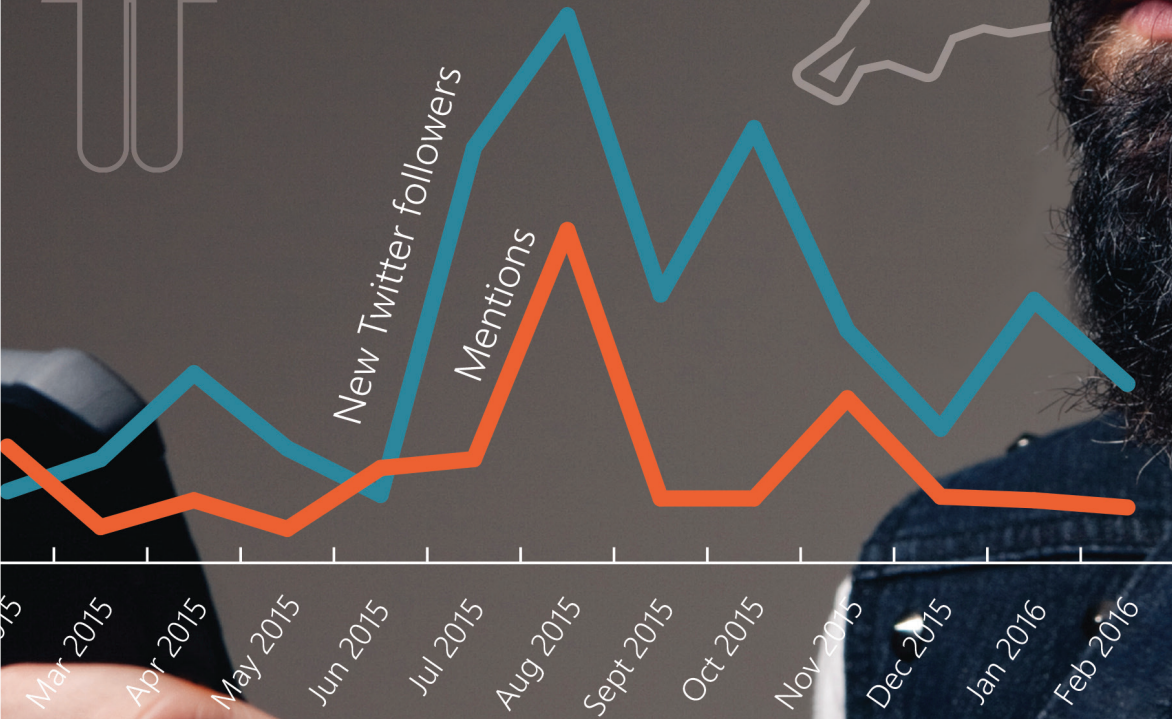


Revenge Porn Helpline

on Twitter



70% of Twitter followers are from the UK





The operation of the helpline

The telephone Helpline operates from Monday to Friday from 10am to 4pm. In practice, however, the Helpline operators also respond to enquiries outside the set working hours in order to reply promptly, offer reassurance or advice or to update a client on the progress of their case. Ways of contacting the Helpline fall into three distinct categories:

- email
- telephone
- whisper (an anonymous online reporting tool)

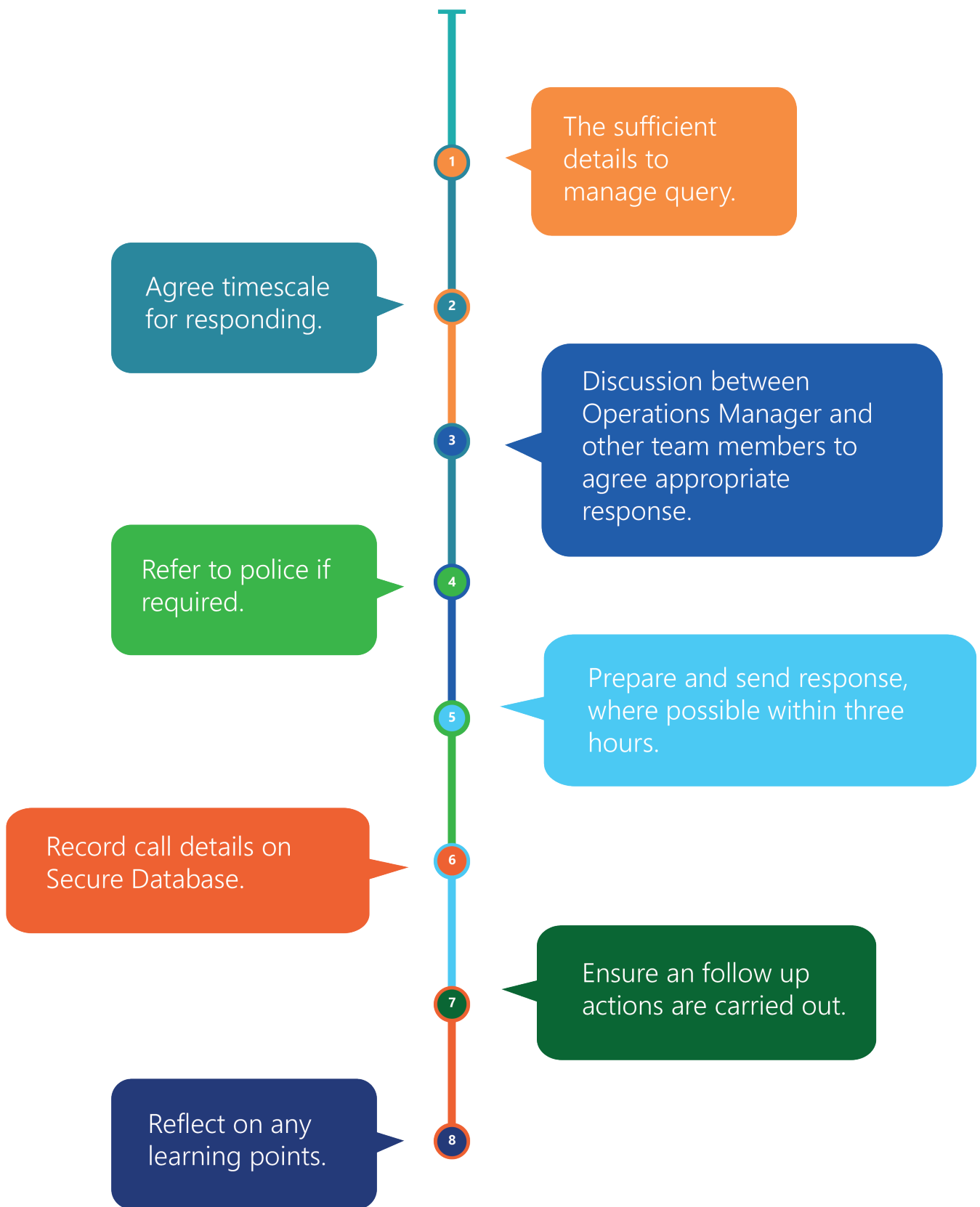
The email and Whisper (anonymous contact) can be accessed at any time - 24 hours per day. The telephone Helpline is closed on national holidays and in line with SWGfL office closures but contact can still be made via email and Whisper

on those days. This information is clearly outlined on the Revenge Pornography Helpline website.

There is clear process of best practice in responding to callers.

Although not currently registered as a member of the Telephones Helpline Association or the Helplines' Partnership, the Revenge Pornography Helpline has been in regular contact with them. They are on their database and have been supported and advised by them. Subject to funding, the Helpline intends to formally join as an accredited member as soon as the pilot phase of the Helpline ends.

Figure 8. Workflow on receipt of contact



Other supporting organisations

The Revenge Pornography Helpline works in partnership with Queen Mary University of London and provides victims with the contact details of their free legal service via SPITE (Sharing and Publishing Images to Embarrass service). SPITE is a free legal service provided to anyone who has been a victim of revenge pornography¹³. The Helpline also very effectively meets its objective to provide information on other support services for victims. Examples of supportive organisations to which victims are referred include: The Samaritans; Relate; Stonewall; Women's Aid; Broken Rainbow; ManKind Initiative; National Stalking Helpline; Getconnected.org.uk; Papyrus; RapeCrisis and sexual assault organisations and the online Facebook support page for Victims of Internet Crime. The Helpline staff are also very clear about the importance of ongoing support to victims in their correspondence and communication with victims.

It was very apparent from the email analysis that the staff kept detailed records of the service providers contacted in each case, each application made by the staff to have images removed on behalf of clients, and that they kept clients up-to-date with their progress without offering false expectations.

The Helpline staff have completed Professional Boundaries training for dealing with distressed and difficult people and there is clear evidence in the correspondence records that staff are responding to each case in an emotionally sensitive but appropriate way in order to effectively advise and support the client.

Evaluation of the helpline data

The following section presents an analysis of the nature of enquiries to the Helpline, initially considering top level statistics and trends before exploring types of cases identified in the analysis of the email data in more detail. The in depth examination of enquiry types illustrates both the breadth of calls and also the broad nature of revenge pornography issues faced by the individuals who contacted the Helpline in the first year. It is based on the evaluation of 650 cases collected from February 2015

to March 2015 and includes information on their characteristics and demographics where available. The analysis presented here examines the development of the Helpline during its first year, considering trends in volume and nature of cases, types of issues victims faced and the response from the Helpline staff.

All staff working on the Helpline have up-to-date and very current knowledge of online issues specifically on relation to privacy, copyright and revenge pornography, and they receive training in both customer care and dealing with difficult issues and emotional situations. In our evaluation of the email correspondence we were extremely impressed by the way that staff communicated with the clients who had contacted them. Correspondence over 6-8 weeks is not unusual. The advice was consistently clear and supportive and included how to block emails and the legal implications of the situation. The practical advice also included encouraging victims to take screen shots and to keep copies of emails, threatening texts and messages on social media. Whilst we were not party to telephone conversations, our analysis of nearly 4,000 emails revealed consistent evidence of the high quality, personalised manner that each person was responded to, giving detailed advice and guidance, and appropriate reassurance but also stressing the need to contact the police where necessary.



Thank you so much for sending me these links. I think I was upset because it was the first time I'd spoken about these things out loud to someone. //



¹³ See <http://bit.ly/1C4tRg2>

Helpline staff:
"I understand this is a very violating situation for you and the idea of having private images shared is distressing but would advise that you do not send the money, often in cases like this if you pay them once they will just keep asking for more. Can I ask if you have contacted the police or do you feel you would be able to contact them on the non-emergency number 101?"

The population which the Helpline identifies as their target group to help is inclusive and non-discriminatory as they document and effectively publicise that they offer information advice and support to any adults in the UK seeking support with revenge porn. There is clear evidence in the data that they successfully meet this objective and also, rather than ignoring requests for help from international callers, the Helpline signposts victims overseas to appropriate support in their own country if they can, for example, recommending www.endrevengeporn.org in the USA.

When an enquiry is logged in the Helpline, the nature of the call is recorded to enable some categorisation to be made, which over time, helps in the identification of trends and characteristics of clients. All contacts are recorded according to a set format and the data is stored securely via the Microsoft 365 system. Should there be a need to hold a number of conversations with a specific caller, the previous records are easily retrievable which maintains consistency between helpline staff and evidences transparency in the email communication. The emails are recorded and stored via threads so that progress and repeat contacts are easily traceable and visible to a member of helpline staff even if they did not take the original call or respond to the original email or telephone call. It is clear from the analysis of the emails that staff work collaboratively to effectively provide a continuity of service sensitively to each client.

The staff also record the following information if possible:

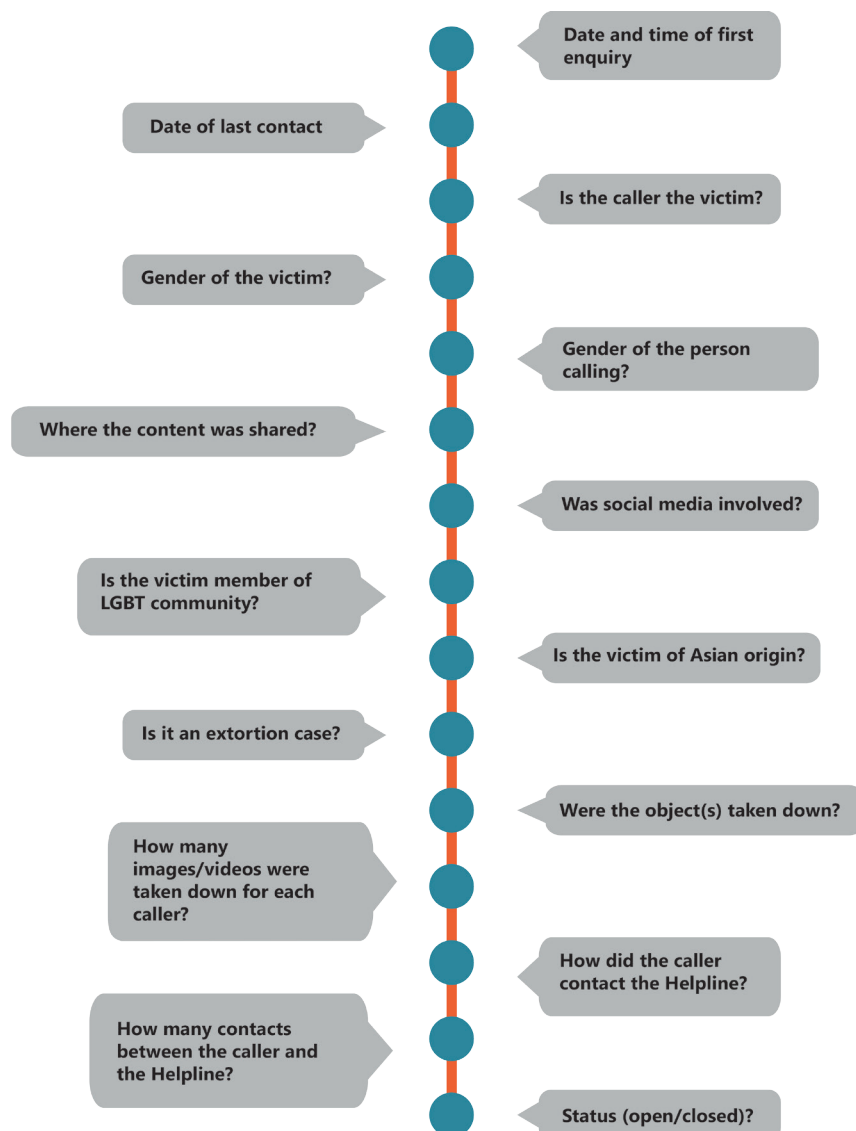


Figure 9. Information recorded by staff where possible.

Helpline Use

Between 8th January 2015 and 8th March 2016 the Revenge Pornography Helpline provided direct help to 650 people over 294 active days. On average the Helpline was contacted by 3 people in a day.

Each person contacting the Helpline had an average of 6 communication exchanges with the Helpline, with half the people contacting the Helpline having more than 3 exchanges. The Helpline had, in total, nearly 4,000 communication exchanges with the 650 people who made contact, for an average of almost 13 exchanges per day.

Figure 11 highlights the number of first enquires to the Revenge Pornography Helpline on a monthly basis during the first year. It is evident from the chart that the Helpline is increasing in popularity as awareness grows and the value of the service is realised. Similar to the increased traffic seen to the Helpline website (detailed on page 14) and increased activity on Twitter (detailed in 16), the main 'spike' seen late August 2015 (between 17th and 20th) coincides with the Channel 4 documentary on revenge pornography and the TV This Morning's programme on August 18th and wider media coverage during that two-week period as detailed in Figure 12.

There is much evidence from the email data that this media coverage, the introduction of the new law on revenge pornography and the awareness campaign that accompanied it, initially gave victims the courage to contact the Helpline and to begin to talk about their experiences. Furthermore, this clearly illustrates the very positive impact of raising awareness through both social media and more traditional media platforms.

Figure 10. Helpline contacts during the first year.

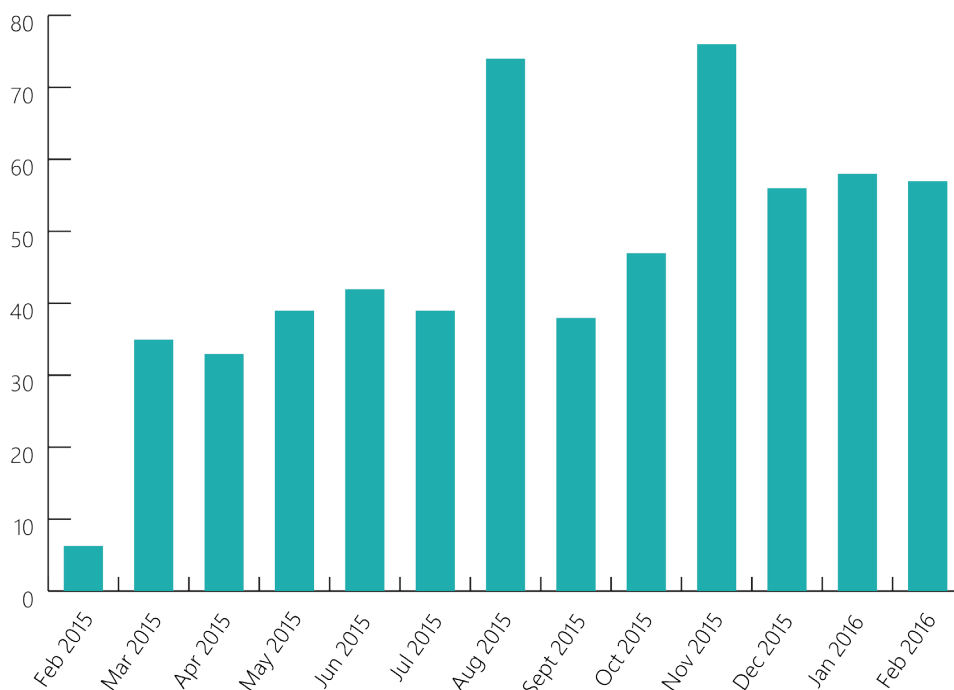


Figure 11. Helpline enquiries.

Media coverage in August 2015

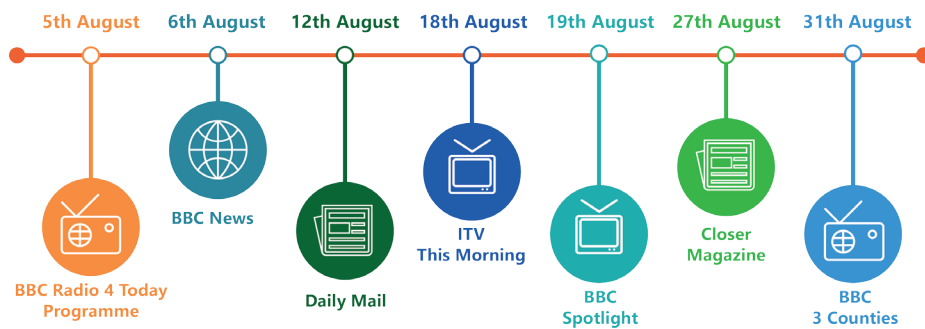


Figure 12. Media coverage in August 2015 when there was a peak in enquires.

Characteristics of callers

The Revenge Pornography Helpline collect data, when they can, on the nature of the case and the characteristics of callers. However, due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the support they provide, often to victims who are distressed and keen to protect their identity, they do not directly ask for demographic details nor individual data, it is only recorded if relevant and emerges from the conversation or email exchange.

It would be inappropriate for helpline staff to ask victims direct questions about their characteristics unless it was helpful to understand their particular situation. Therefore, the data sets are not always complete.

Gender

Of the 650 unique cases analysed for this evaluation there were 157 (24%) male callers and 469 (76%) female callers. There were 126 (19%) male victims identified and 510 (79%) female victims. A small number of cases (14 2%) were categorised as 'no victims'.

Not all the persons who contacted the Helpline were the victims of revenge porn themselves: 112 (17%) were not victims themselves and tended to call more for practical advice. In the cases where the person who contacted the Helpline was not a victim themselves it was because they were seeking help and advice on behalf of another person such as a family member or a friend. Females were slightly more likely to contact the Helpline themselves if they were the victims, compared with males: 86% of females who contacted the Helpline were also victims, compared with 71% of males who contacted the organisation.

Figure 13. Gender of all callers.

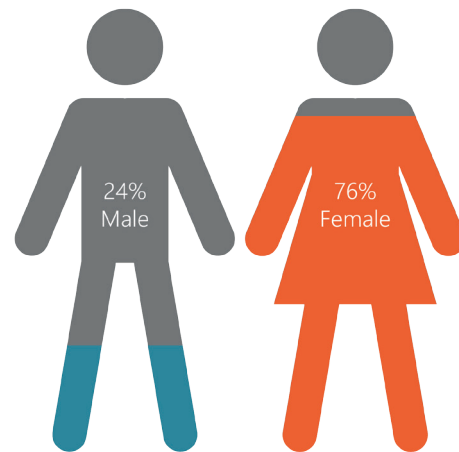
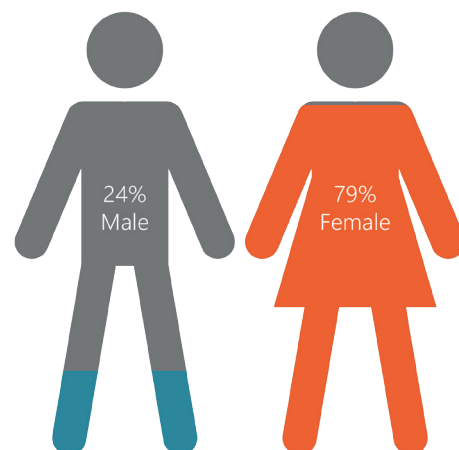


Figure 14. Gender of callers who are also a victim.



Among the reported victims of revenge porn, either those who contacted the Helpline themselves or not, 126 (20%) were males and 510 (79%) were females. In 75 cases (12%) the service users were of Asian origin, and in 92 cases (15%) the caller's ethnicity was not reported.

Figure 15. Was the caller the victim?

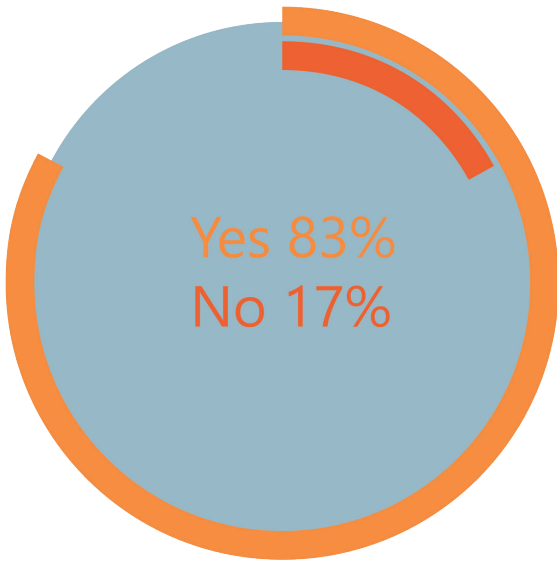
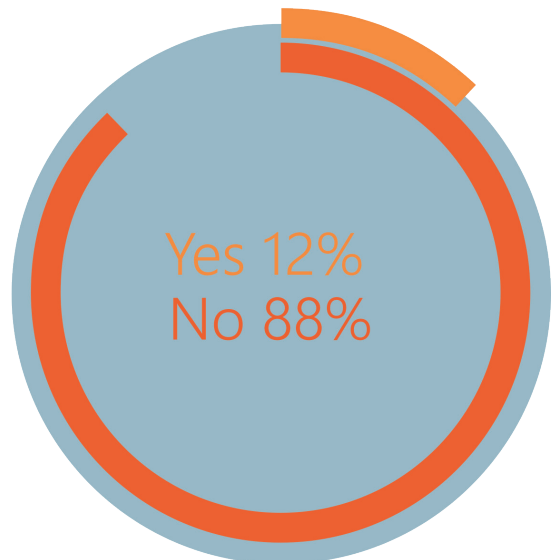


Figure 16. Is it an extortion case?



I am a victim of revenge porn. I have been through a great deal of emotional distress. What hurts more is that I am suffering day to day. The images are still out there, this cruel and terrible act has ruined my life. Please help me through this suffering.



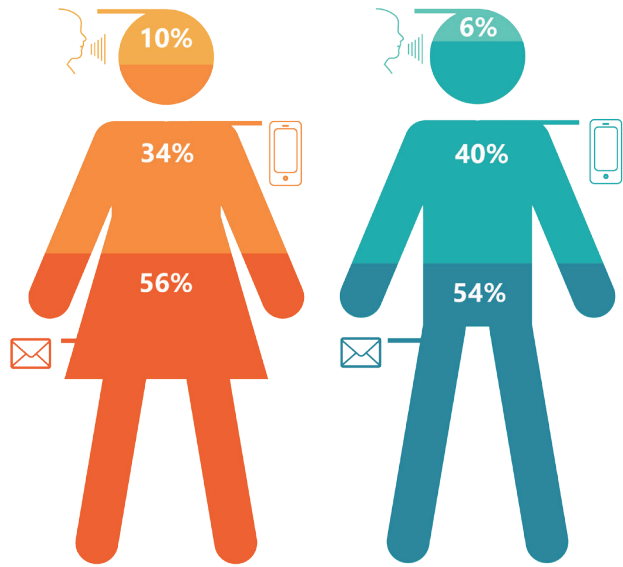
Figure 17. How did people contact the Helpline?



First contact - Channels used to contact the Helpline

Figure 17 shows the different channels used to contact the Helpline and the proportion of enquiries per channel. Enquirers can ultimately end up using multiple channels during ongoing contact which can last weeks or months. The most preferred channel of communication was the email, with more than half of the people who contacted the Helpline preferring this method; this is probably because an email provides a sense of anonymity and gives the caller more time to compose the information. The second preferred channel was the phone, with more than a third preferring this method; this fact emphasises the

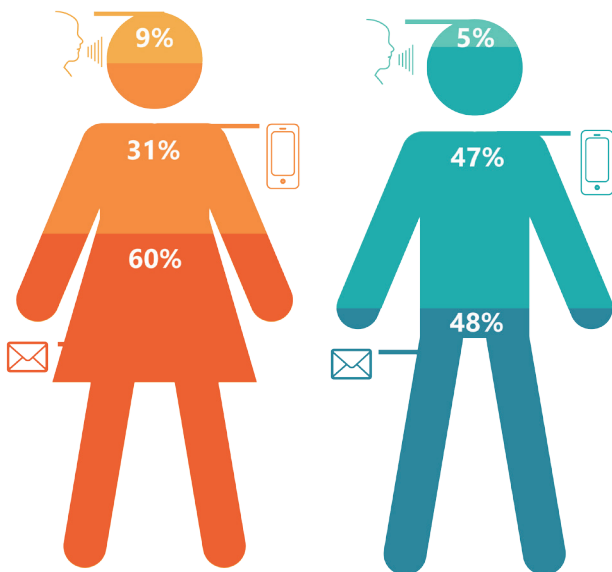
Figure 18. Channels used to contact the Helpline by gender of caller



importance of keeping the phone line open. Online channels (Whisper) were less popular, with less than 9% of contacts preferring this method of communication.

When a victim contacts the Helpline themselves, men are more likely than women to use the telephone whilst women are more likely to email. Well over half (60%) of female victims who contacted the Helpline did so via email whereas only just less than half (48%) of male victims who contacted the Helpline did so via email. It is interesting that email was more popular than the telephone as the point of initial contact with women, but men tended to prefer the telephone for contacting the Helpline initially.

It is interesting that over half of the initial contacts with the Helpline were via email (although males preferred the telephone). Although some first contacts were more detailed, they were often very brief, for example,



“Dear helpline, please ring me on.....”

or

“My partner posted images of me. I don’t know what to do”

Figure 19. Gender of callers who are victims and their method of contacting the Helpline.

The type of support required

When an enquiry is logged by the Helpline, the nature of the call is recorded to enable some categorisation to be made, which over time, helps in the identification of trends in enquiries. It is important to note here that almost half of the people who contacted the Helpline required both emotional and practical support in removing the images and online content, while 15% require only emotional support and 38% only practical support. In general men were more likely to call for practical advice than women; 49% of men who contacted the Helpline required practical advice only compared with 34% of women.

	Male	Female
Both emotional and practical advice	61 (39%)	243 (50%)
Emotional Support	19 (12%)	82 (17%)
Practical Advice	77 (49%)	167 (34%)

Table 1. Gender of person contacting the Helpline and type of support.

Where the images were shared or published

Where the images are posted varies. There are an increasing number of sites dedicated to revenge pornography but everyday social media is also used to post and publish images and videos. Content on social media can be hard to find by the victim especially if they do not have an account on that particular social media platform or if the images have been shared between a closed group as opposed to a public profile.

The online location of where the images are posted is also important to understanding the impact of revenge pornography. Whilst some images are reported on sites that are considered to be mainstream social media like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram, other sites are dedicated revenge pornography sites which post user-submitted nude or semi-nude images of individuals and allow users to comment on victims.

These sites make money from internet advertising on their sites which are becoming increasingly trafficked. Most dedicated revenge pornography sites allow images and videos to be uploaded without the victim's consent but with their real name, address, links to their personal social media profiles or professional online profile together with insulting and degrading comments like 'slut'; 'whore'; 'fat bitch'; 'slack cunt' designed to cause humiliation, shame and embarrassment. The number of views and comments from viewers, often degrading, are also published on the site.

"About three years ago he did a similar thing to a previous ex by hacking her Facebook and changing her profile and cover photo to pictures of her masturbating, then changed her password so she could not remove the posts."

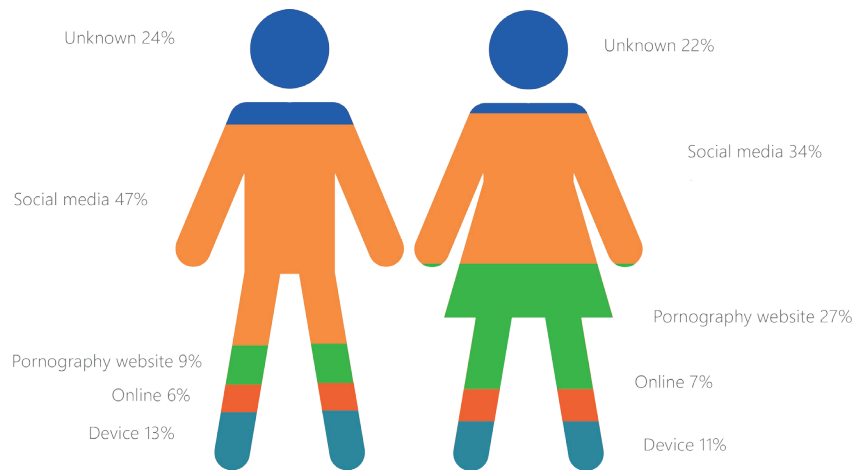


Figure 20. Proportion of where content was shared.

The images and videos posted on these dedicated revenge pornography sites are arguably less likely (perhaps) to be seen by family and friends than when the material is posted onto everyday social media like Facebook and Twitter, for example, but often the link(s) to the victim’s content on these sites is also sent to the victim’s family and friends to ensure maximum humiliation and embarrassment to the victim.

Categorising the types of sites where content is posted is problematic. The Revenge Pornography Helpline database does not record in detail the type of site where the content is posted in terms of whether it is a dedicated revenge pornography site versus a generic pornography site. It does, however, helpfully record whether the content is on social media or an ‘online’ source when it was determined that the content was shared on a website, but cannot be linked to a particular one.

The ‘device’ category refers to when the caller has declared that the content is on an electronic device (usually with the ex-partner) such as a computer, mobile phone or tablet but did not mention it being shared online.

In almost a quarter of cases (159, 24%) the content was shared on a social media site such as Instagram, Twitter or Facebook. In almost 15% of cases the content was shared on a dedicated pornography (but not necessarily revenge pornography) site and in 5% of the cases the contents was shared ‘online’, without clear specification. These cases would suggest that both commonly used social media, for example, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram are becoming increasingly widespread for revenge pornography as well as the more dedicated revenge pornography sites.

There is a significant difference by the victim’s gender as to where content is shared or posted. 25% of female victims had content posted on a pornography website, compared with only 7.1% of male victims. Interestingly for social media and being held on a device the opposite is true (7.0% versus 10.3% and 21.9% versus 37.3% respectively). This gender difference is also seen in the findings

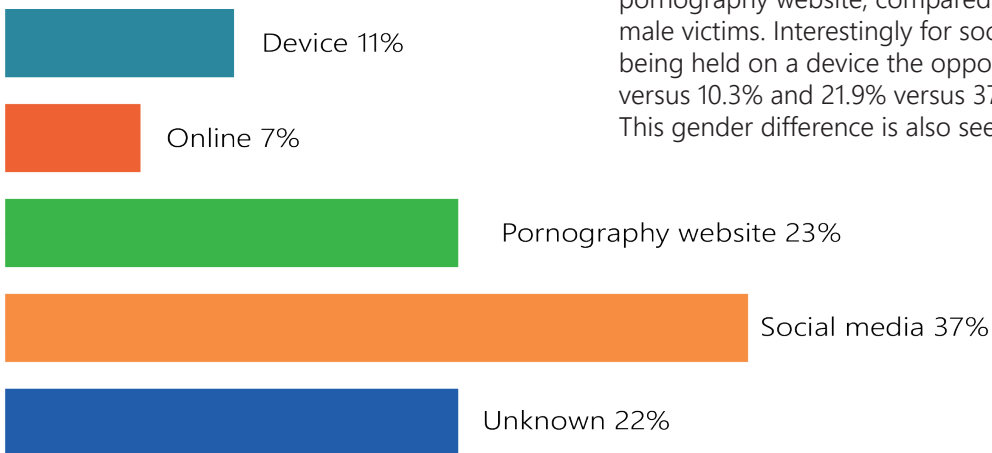


Figure 21. Where the content was posted.

that male victims are more likely to be victims of extortion, and that victims of extortion are more likely to have their content on social media or on partner's device.

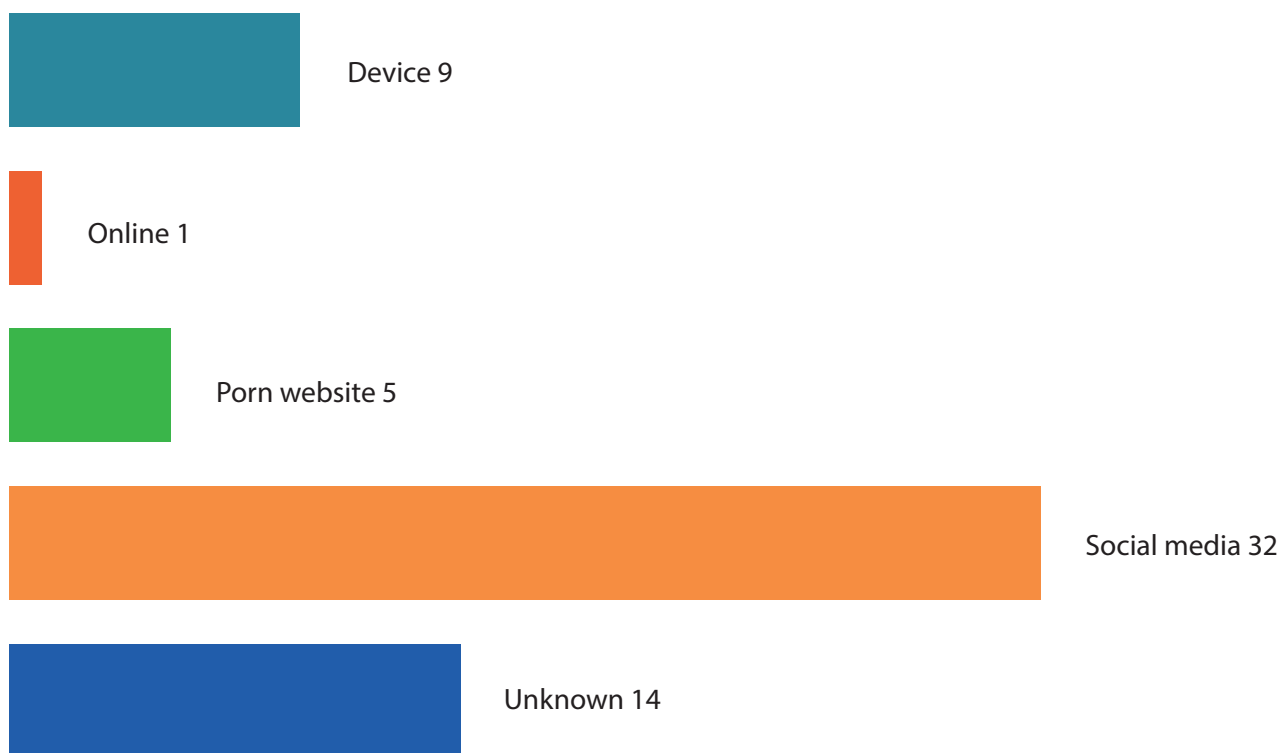
Extortion

49 (4.5%) people who contacted the Helpline said that the content was on their ex-partner's device

(computer, phone, etc.) without it necessarily having been shared at that point in time. This seems to be related to extortion cases; situations when the content was shared on a social media site or was on an ex partner's device were more likely to be extortion cases: in 12% of extortion cases the content was on partner's device, compared with 7% of non-extortion cases and similarly, 41% of extortion cases had the content shared on a social media site, compared with 22% of non-extortion cases.

Of the 78 cases (12%) that were directly identified as linked to extortion, the victim was more likely to be male. 29% of male victims were an extortion case, compared with only 8% of female victims.

Figure 22. Extortion cases and where the content was posted.



Many clients require ongoing support as evidenced by the email exchanges over a period of time. The Helpline refers victims to other supportive organisations for emotional support, including for example, The Samaritans, the support group on Facebook for Victims of Internet Crime, Women's Aid, Stonewall or Relate. Many cases, however, contact the Helpline again when other images are found or they need further information and advice because their

circumstances or the situation changes. Of the 650 unique cases, 231 (37%) were still open at the time of the evaluation. Closed cases tend to be older and they represent cases that were either only requesting information, cases that were successfully solved (content taken down) or cases that were referred to other services.

Getting images removed

The Revenge Pornography Helpline provides a free service to victims who have often suffered frightening, degrading and ongoing abuse. Sometimes victims previously had turned to reputation management companies, who charge to have images removed, but from the victims' email accounts they had often paid large amounts of money, feeling desperate and not knowing what else to do, yet on many occasions these companies were ineffective and did not succeed in getting the images removed.

Evidence in emails suggests the Helpline is very successful in having content removed from websites hosted both inside and outside the UK. The Helpline staff always contact the victims to provide them with information on whether or not they have been successful in getting content removed.

The Helpline works in two ways to remove content:

1. Reactive content removal is when a victim has contacted the Helpline as they know images/videos have been posted or shared and where it is located. In all cases where content is identified to the Helpline either by the victim or by others reporting content on behalf of a victim, the Helpline staff support the client in seeking to get content removed. At times if clients wish to, and are able to, they will use the information and reporting links provided by the Helpline to get content removed themselves. Removal is often successful when content is hosted on websites of the better established mainstream social media organisations who take their responsibilities in protecting victims of revenge pornography seriously. This can be an empowering process which can restore the victim's confidence and control over their content. In many cases, however, the victim is too distressed or unable to report the content themselves. In these cases the Helpline staff will contact the social media organisation or website themselves and report the content. It is in these cases that the strong partnerships that the Helpline staff have developed with ISPs and social media organisations provide powerful mechanisms to help victims. The success rate that the Helpline have in removing content on social media, as evidenced in the email exchanges between helpline staff and certain social media organisations, is commendable and whilst content removal from pornography and revenge pornography websites is more

problematic, their success rate is noticeably improving, which is remarkable given the transient nature of many sites of this type.

The analysis of the emails suggests that as the dialogue with clients develops the exchanges become more detailed as the victim develops a trusting relationship with the Helpline staff. This is key to successful support and very important for the victims to feel able to share the actual URLs of their images. They are often embarrassed to do so but the staff are very reassuring and explain that they can be more effective in getting images removed if they have the direct URL link for the image(s) or online content. This is key to the success the Helpline has in finding and requesting that the images are removed:

Helpline staff: "I know this is difficult to do but if you can send me the direct URLs of where the images are I can try to get them removed for you."

2. Proactive content removal is when a member of helpline staff identifies a UK victim on one of the more prevalent revenge pornography sites and report it to the website and request it is taken down. This service provided by the Helpline staff is an additional activity in their fight against revenge pornography. The Helpline staff, when not directly contacting victims or reporting known content identified by victims, searches the more prevalent hosting sites of revenge pornography content to identify UK victims. Once identified the Helpline staff contact the host provider with the URL(s) of the content and request that the images are taken down. This pro-active reporting has resulted in hundreds of images being removed without the victims ever knowing that their images had been posted on the sites, to minimise the harm of revenge porn, and demonstrates the Helpline's vigilance in having images removed to the websites posting such content.

A More In-depth Analysis of the Nature of Cases

The statistical analysis gives a top level perspective on the frequency and type of cases that have occurred during the first year of the Helpline. This section explores different aspects of revenge pornography cases that the Helpline has responded to over the thirteen-month period and presents examples which illustrate the sort of issues that the Helpline's clients faced.

This exploration illustrates both the nature and breadth of issues facing victims. The email data were sampled to illustrate particular issues in the discussion and are presented in an anonymised manner. They are indicative of the range of unique cases that the Helpline have responded to. We found little evidence of any 'time wasters' amongst call log data nor in over 2,000 incoming emails, Whisper reports (which also appear in the email inbox) and enquiries to the Helpline. The people who contacted the Helpline were genuinely asking for advice, support and practical help with their situation. The vast majority of the reasons why people contacted the Helpline were because images or video material had either been posted online or because they were worried that it would be.

The scope of revenge pornography

There are a diversity of behaviours and motivations associated with revenge pornography which require consideration in order to have a clearer understanding of the variety of different contexts, situations and circumstances in which revenge pornography occurs. For example, in many cases victims of revenge pornography have voluntarily shared self-produced images with the perpetrator, for example, as a 'selfie' or by 'sexting' images during the course of an intimate, sexual relationship or as a way of flirting, or may have allowed themselves to be photographed or filmed naked or during sexual activity. Whilst such images and video material are often produced or shared consensually with a person whom the victim felt they could trust, the perpetrator subsequently uses that image for malicious purposes without consent, often when the relationship has ended.

"Hi, my boyfriend of 6 years cheated on me a few months ago. Now he is blackmailing me to get back with him. I don't want to and now he is using

pictures of me that I sent him years ago. He is threatening to put them up on Instagram. He sent me all the pictures and told me to choose one so he can put it up. He called me a slag and a whore. I cannot stop crying. I blocked him and now he is harassing me by email. He is telling me that I deserved it and he has put them up on Instagram."

In other cases, the perpetrator may not be the person to whom the images or video material were originally sent. The images or video can be shared either between individuals or published online or through social media and a 'third party' threatens to or actually republishes or reshapes the material in order to cause distress to the victim. Revenge pornography is designed to cause maximum distress and anxiety to the victim even if the images are not actually posted or shared. Sometimes private content has been posted or shared from a stolen mobile device or, in another case, a couple were blackmailed for money after images were stolen from a laptop. In other cases, the victim was blackmailed for sex by a third party, for example:

"I am being threatened and blackmailed by a guy who says he will post my photos to social media sites if I do not make him videos or meet him for sex. He has many indecent photos of me that apparently were passed to him by the original male I sent them too."



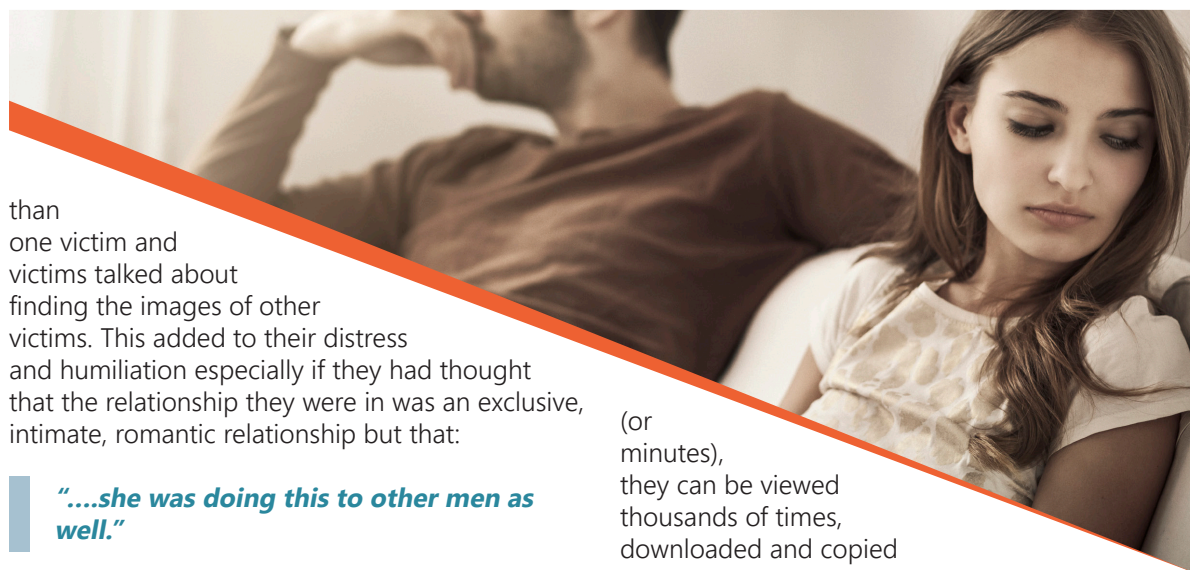
Alternatively, images may have been obtained non-consensually through coercion or blackmail or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Whether the images and/or video were produced and shared conceptually the offender often seeks to use the image(s) as a means of control, for financial extortion or to cause psychological distress and harm to the victim or to damage their professional reputation. Sometimes the perpetrator threatened to send images to the victim's partner (if they were in a new relationship or had had an affair, for example, or after cybersex), to their parents (especially if the victim was young and still living at home) or to their children. Whilst perpetrators are commonly ex-partners of the victim, they are also often wider associates, sometimes work colleagues or even family members. The victim does not always know who the perpetrator is. Sometimes victims did not know that the photographs had even been taken or that they had been filmed, for example, whilst having a shower.

"Hello, first of all thank you for this website and taking your time to read this, I don't know where else to turn. I am so

scared, humiliated and ashamed. I feel like I can't talk to anyone because I will be judged. Someone I was having sex with has taken a video of me in the act with him, without my permission, and whilst I was highly intoxicated in my friend's house. I did not know I was being video taped! This was less than a year ago and I've just found out as he's been showing people around town. Apparently he's doing it so other people around town don't go near me, I'm so scared he puts it on social media. I feel like I don't want to exist, I don't know what to do."

The cases which were detailed in the Helpline data also included examples of ex-partners sending images to new partners as an act of revenge in order to break up or undermine a relationship. Sometimes these instances also included threatening new partners.

Perpetrators can have more than one victim either that they have known and had a relationship with or, in the cases of online/cybersex scams, multiple victims are targeted. Often perpetrators had more



than one victim and victims talked about finding the images of other victims. This added to their distress and humiliation especially if they had thought that the relationship they were in was an exclusive, intimate, romantic relationship but that:

"...she was doing this to other men as well."

Some other examples included accepting friend requests on social media, for example, Facebook or meeting someone in a chatroom or an online dating site and then engaging in nudity or sexual activity via a webcam and Skype, for example, before almost immediately being blackmailed for money and the other party threatening to send the video or images to the victim's partner, family or employer or generally make them public. As noted previously in cases of extortion, males were more likely to be a victim of financial extortion.

Sometimes even though images are only posted online for a few days, or even a matter of hours

(or minutes), they can be viewed thousands of times, downloaded and copied elsewhere.

This has an impact on the potential risk and psychological harm that is experienced by the victim. There is much overlap between revenge pornography and other online abuses such as cyberbullying. Sometimes victims are sent brutal, violent pornographic videos alongside threats or suggestions that this will happen to them. Victims often reported having their social media profiles 'hacked into' and naked images or videos of sexual activity including masturbation uploaded onto their profile. The perpetrator would then change the password so that the victim could not access their profile to remove the material.

“About three years ago he did a similar thing to a previous ex by hacking her Facebook and changing her profile and cover photo to pictures of her masturbating, then changed her password so she could not remove the posts.”

Using a victim’s online identity and social media profiles to set up false accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Grindr or Instagram, for example, in their name and identity is also common. Other examples include using the victim’s name, surname and date of birth attached to or tagged in pornographic images which are not actually them or having their face ‘photoshopped’ onto a pornographic image and associated with their name or online identity. Such behaviour includes examples where details have been taken from a professional online profile, the victim was then stalked and threatened and the details posted with personal details of the victims alongside comments encouraging rape linked to the victim’s business website. Once this has happened it is hard to prove or convince others that the image is a false one. Furthermore, the posting of naked images or sex videos with identifying personal information can increase the risk of online abuse, stalking and harassment from others. Some of the cases reported to the Helpline detailed fake profiles on Twitter and other social media, and fake profiles on online dating sites with nude pictures which resulted in strangers turning up on their doorstep.

Online bullying and very public abusive comments were also common as were false accusations and many cases were examples of hate crime. Being called a ‘slut’ or ‘whore’; a paedophile or ‘child molester’ or being publically ‘outed’ as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender were common. Perpetrators also associate victims with insulting words when posting images, for example, name.surname.town.shag; name.surname.masturbating; name.surname.gay.paedo; name.surname.slag or name.surname.whore. Sexually humiliating photographs were often used.

Often victims had followed advice and taken precautions to protect themselves from further abuse but perpetrators would then adopt a different approach to continue the abusive behaviour. For example, if the victim had blocked them on email and text the perpetrator would contact them via social media or via a friend and send them a message:

[citing ex-boyfriend’s correspondence with her friend]: “I know she’s blocked me – tell her to look in her inbox.”

Many of the victims had been under 18 when the images or video was taken. It was clear from the analysis of the data that the cases the Helpline dealt with were highly complex and had been going on for many years. In such cases the Helpline staff referred the image to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) or the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) who investigated the image and had it removed.

The Helpline is also contacted by people who are not victims themselves, but who have found sites where images of girls naked have been uploaded and shared online e.g. on Instagram. The Helpline have also been contacted on a number of occasions to give advice on how to deal with anonymous people contacting girls asking for naked photographs.

It is important to remember that each individual who contacts the Helpline is unique and each case is unique. The analysis of both the Helpline data and the qualitative data held in email records demonstrates that the advice, help and guidance provided by the Helpline to the people who contact them is highly individualised and sensitive to their unique situation.

The email contact varies in both number of contacts and duration but frequently they are highly detailed exchanges between the victim and the Helpline staff about the specific aspects of the situation; the context through which it arose; a discussion on the nature and location of the images; what can practically be done to minimize the damage and where the victim can seek additional emotional support. Most often the individuals who contact the Helpline are victims themselves either because an image or images have been posted online or because someone has threatened to share them or post them online. Contact with the Helpline is also frequently made because an individual is concerned about a friend or a family member either because of actual posting(s) or the threat to.

The uniqueness and individuality of each caller and each case is of paramount importance to the Helpline team and although they have a protocol for handling the enquiry (see figure 8), once contact has been made, they are extremely careful to ensure that they are sensitive to each individual’s needs and unique circumstances.

Police

The Helpline had also been used by police officers supporting victims of revenge pornography for advice on how to get images removed. The Helpline staff were able to advise police officers on how to do this but also to provide practical direct help for victims especially if they had the URL of the image. Again this was where the effective partnership working with service providers was apparent as Helpline staff could make direct contact with someone in the organisation to make the request that the police did not necessarily have access to.

It is apparent from the analysis of the email data that victims had rather mixed but often poor experiences when they contacted the police. Victims, for example, may be told to contact Facebook because of a violation of privacy issues but the intent for malicious communication and/or harassment was overlooked. The victims' accounts frequently included accounts of how they felt the local police were not taking their experiences and concerns seriously. Whilst this is an evaluation of the Helpline and not of the police service, it is worth noting here that a better understanding of revenge pornography by police officers and the criminal justice system generally would better support victims:

"I understand the law for this has only recently passed. The women who has dealt with me has said that they have never dealt with this before, but they know how bad it is and how much distress it's causing me. But they are totally clueless about this kind of crime, and I mean that in a nice way. I'm not saying I will, but what if I committed suicide tonight? They have done absolutely nothing to help this. It's a waiting game for me, and I have a risk of it happening again over me."

Solutions to revenge pornography are far from straightforward. Often the cases are complex and the long-term and often the ongoing nature of revenge pornography should not be underestimated even after legal sanctions and law enforcement agencies have been involved. There were cases reported to the Helpline in which the perpetrators had been to court and found guilty of malicious communication but the photographs and videos (produced in many cases unknown to the victim) were still on the internet in spite of the legal sanctions in place.

Images and video(s) are sometimes posted after the victim has contacted the police. Even when

the police have got evidence and perpetrators have been charged, they may not be able to help victims in getting the content removed. Many victims contacted the Helpline after criminal justice proceedings for help in getting content removed and support in moving on. Other support agencies have a key role to play here.

"Even after the police were involved and the photos removed he has continued to post the same videos with my full name as well as degrading captions all over the internet."

Partnership working

It was evident from the email analysis that staff worked very effectively together to collaboratively support clients and keep them informed. The staff also worked as an effective team to follow up with service providers on requests for material to be removed. There was clear evidence that there is strong collaboration and effective working practices between the Revenge Pornography Helpline staff, the POSH staff, SWGfL and UK Safer Internet Centre teams as well as social media organisations and service providers. This partnership working is key to the Helpline's success and this collaboration is highly commendable and results in highly effective working practices to support clients and in removing wherever possible.

If additional input or expert advice is required, queries are disseminated amongst the wider network of professionals who work in close and very effective collaboration with the Revenge Pornography Helpline which includes the IWF; CEOP; the UK Safer Internet Centre and Insafe. The evidence of partnership working with industry, online service providers, policy makers and a wide range of NGOs and charitable organisations, including rape and sexual assault organisations, has been evident throughout the evaluation and provides a reliable and wide reaching network of expert advice, which is highly beneficial to the Helpline but most importantly to the clients themselves. Sometimes cases are referred into the Revenge Pornography Helpline from these other organisations especially via the POSH. These highly effective working practices between Helpline staff and online service providers permit a direct point of contact with many social media companies. This means in practice that helpline staff know who to contact to request to have an image removed on a number

of social media platforms.

As noted in the introduction, the psychological and emotional impact of revenge pornography is only just beginning to be understood. There are many occurrences in the email transcripts of phrases such as 'it has ruined my life' and references to suicide, depression, fear, poor self-confidence, lack of trust, being scared to go out and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are common in the clients' accounts.

"I am a victim of revenge porn. I have been through a great deal of emotional distress. What hurts more is that I am suffering day to day. The images are still out there, this cruel and terrible act has ruined my life. Please help me through this suffering."

Another victim said in their email:

"I can't leave the house, I'm so scared. I feel humiliated and absolutely mortified about the whole thing. I went back down to the police station today with evidence. Screen shots of the actual post he put up on Facebook, and messages between himself and my friend basically saying he wants to ruin my life."

Similarly another victim also talked about their feelings:

"I've just become a victim of this and I'm in a terrible state over this to the point where I feel like killing myself because I can't handle the embarrassment of my pictures being out there."

Not only are there frequent references to victims disclosing that they had suicidal thoughts or feelings in the data but there are also examples of victims stating that this was the intention of the perpetrator and that they were doing this with the intent to make the victim kill themselves.

In our analysis the help and support offered to each victim was carefully considered in each unique case. The Helpline has an essential role to play in providing both emotional and practical help to victims and they work effectively and collaboratively with a range of other partners and supporting organisations to ensure that, wherever possible, the damage caused by revenge pornography is ameliorated and that the victim is supported towards recovery.

Client satisfaction

There is very little evidence of negative feedback in the analysis of the email data and Twitter feed. In fact the vast majority of feedback from the email data is overwhelmingly positive.

On the very few occasions that an even slightly negative comment was made, for example in the time it took to respond over a bank holiday, the Helpline responded very quickly to explain and offer further help. The one point to make here, however, is the negative coverage in the media that the Helpline received in relation to telephone charges. In response they issued a clear statement in relation to call charges to the Helpline and this information is available on their website:

"The Helpline number is 0845 6000 459 and is not a premium rate number. It is a Lo-call rate from BT landlines, with a maximum charge of 5p per minute."

"Calls from mobiles will cost significantly more, however we are always happy to return calls on request. The Helpline does not operate a call queuing system, protecting callers from unexpected call charges."

Due to the nature of the help and support offered by the Helpline to victims who are often clearly distressed and anxious, it would be inappropriate to ask them for direct feedback on the service they had received. Furthermore, due to confidentiality and not being able to pass on details to be contacted by a third party client satisfaction is monitored through the email and telephone conversations. From our independent analysis of the email conversations, it was clear that most clients were very happy with the help and support they had received both from practical and emotional perspectives.

"The force will be contacting me for a proper statement in the next few days but like you also stated, it will be a tricky one to prove due to it not coming directly from his profile or anything. They mentioned about victim support also and I said I was recommended to call you guys. I'm really grateful you've been supportive and I'm hoping this will be the first step to getting things resolved now, so just wanted to say thank you."

6. Conclusion

This evaluation has presented an analysis of the first 13 months of activity for the Revenge Pornography Helpline. The picture that emerges overall from these findings is that the Helpline has been highly successful in providing a specialist helpline service to offer advice, and signpost victims to all the options available to them including legal support and removal of content. Victims need both emotional support and practical help and the Helpline is very effective in meeting both these areas of need and victims value both aspects of the Helpline's service highly.

Our analysis illustrates that the Helpline is becoming increasingly busy with the majority of contacts being made from victims themselves who need information, advice, support or practical help. Revenge pornography has a devastating, often long-term impact on victims either when image(s) or video(s) are posted or shared or when there is the threat that someone will do this. Responding to the issue of revenge pornography is not always straightforward because of the nature of digital content (images can be easily copied and posted elsewhere) and the complexity of abusive relationships. Victims can live in constant fear of images appearing online or being posted on social media and feel stigmatised, having to relive the shame and humiliation time and time again. Across the 650 cases considered here it is clear that revenge pornography is a complex, complicated and difficult issue to respond to and 'this complexity makes dealing with revenge porn as a monolithic whole a difficult matter'¹⁴.

The Helpline, through their relationship with POSH and the UK Safer Internet centre, has successfully built on their collaborative relationships with the Internet Industry, social networks and ISPs to ensure swift resolution of issues which is of tremendous benefit to victims.

Raising awareness of revenge pornography is essential and the Helpline has had a highly visible and very significant role to play in raising public

and political awareness of the issue during its first year. The analysis of the data, together with the email transcripts, suggests that the Revenge Pornography Helpline provides a unique, valuable, high quality, sensitive, responsive yet also practical service for victims.

Moving forward –Recommendations

The Revenge Pornography Helpline is providing a very valuable service to victims. They have been highly effective in raising awareness and have been increasingly successful in getting images taken down and removed from social media and online platforms.

Looking forward, collecting additional data would enable a more detailed understanding of the types of specific issues that certain groups may face, for example, member of the Asian community or the LGBTQI community. It would be inappropriate to ask for specific personal details from victims, but when it emerges from cases that they may be hate crime related, it may be helpful to record this. Additional data on the following may be helpful in monitoring the scope and scale of revenge pornography in the future:

- images of under 18s
- if suicide is mentioned
- if depression is mentioned
- ensuring that all reported content is recorded
- recording precisely where content is reported
- having specific categories for online content, for example, if it is a dedicated revenge pornography website, a gay pornography website or specific social media such as Grindr or Trinder

The pilot phase of the Helpline has clearly demonstrated an ongoing need for this valuable work. It would be advisable in the future to focus on awareness raising for both victims and also

¹⁴ Stroud, S. R. (2014) The Dark Side of the Online Self: A Pragmatist Critique of the Growing Plague of Revenge Porn in *Journal of Mass media Ethics*, Vol. 29 (3) pp. 168-183.

practitioners especially those working in the field on domestic abuse to ensure the learning on how to manage incidents is disseminated widely. Building on the partnership approach the Helpline has already successfully established, some targeted outreach work could be also considered to ensure under-represented groups have better access to the service. Finally further engagement with the Police and Criminal Justice services could ensure victims receive the best support when reporting to law enforcement agencies and with prosecutions.



Thank you again for getting back to me and thank you for your kind words. Hearing back from you and what you have said has made me feel a bit better in myself.



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