

NEWS RELEASE

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Talking the language of on-line abuse The conversational techniques of paedophiles on the Net

Children are literally being talked into taking part in on-line cybersex scenarios by paedophiles employing particular conversational techniques, according to a leading Internet expert.

In a paper to the Home Office on Thursday 17 July, Rachel O'Connell from the Cyberspace Research Unit at the University of Central Lancashire, will reveal how paedophiles go through a number of conversation stages with their victims, to first win their trust before engaging them in increasingly sexually explicit conversations.

In some cases children have even been subjected to cyber-rape scenarios by adults or adolescents posing as children in on-line chat rooms that are accessible via the Internet or through mobile phones.

According to O'Connell, new communication technologies are increasingly being used as a tool for exploitation and abuse and, because they are constantly evolving, they keep changing the parameters of paedophile activity.

The paper "A typology of child cybersexploitation and on-line grooming practices" also refers to the practice of paedophiles advising each other, through paedophile chat rooms, on how to avoid detection when involved in on-line activity targeting children.

With anti-grooming legislation yet to be passed, the paper is the first of its kind to unravel the nature, scope and extent of the processes which characterise cybersexploitation and online grooming, by proposing stages of paedophiles' on-line behaviour. It is the result of more than five years of research into on-line paedophile activity and it carries a number of recommendations for future action in this area.

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Notes to editors:

1. Rachel O'Connell will be available for interview from Thursday 17th July 2003. Please ring Charlotte Barrow in the Cyberspace Research Unit at the University of Central Lancashire on 01772 893758 to arrange an interview.

2. Grooming has been defined in the proposed anti-grooming legislation as 'A course of conduct enacted by a suspected paedophile, which would give a reasonable person cause for concern that any meeting with a child arising from the conduct would be for unlawful purposes.'

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For further information please contact the **Media Office**

Tel 01772 892403 · Fax 01772 892934

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