

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of East London (UEL)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 20 Social Work and Social Policy		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Think of the children; Safeguarding children online from harm		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2018 – 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Julia Davidson	Professor of Criminology and Director of the Institute for Connected Communities	2018 – present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2018 – 2020 (ongoing)		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		

**1. Summary of the impact** (indicative maximum 100 words)

As children go online, strategies must be developed to make sure that their online interactions are safeguarded. Research, led by Davidson, addressed major social issues and improved national and international policy, industry, and practice. This research has led to several impacts including: affecting online harm policies, internet service regulation and the development of the UK Safety Tech Sector; development of a child online protection policy and five-year implementation plan in Rwanda. The key beneficiaries are young people, vulnerable children and agencies working to protect them from online harm, UK and international policy makers in the area of online harms.

**2. Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)

While the safe and creative use of digital technologies offers children previously unimaginable opportunities, there is a growing understanding of the risks and harms to children associated with its use. Davidson's research has focused upon child and adult online harms exploring offending behaviour including online grooming; child and adult online behaviour and safety; legislation and policy at national and international level; policing and industry practice in the prevention of online harms.

Current research focuses upon young people's pathways into illegal Internet use and prevention-focused awareness raising, funded through an H2020 grant (**G7**). A Child Online Protection (COP) policy and five-year implementation plan in Rwanda (**R3, G6**) was supported by an understanding of child and adult online harms (**R4, R5, G5**).

Findings from the Gap Analysis conducted in Rwanda were instrumental in identifying specific services relevant to COP, developing and fine-tuning the communications strategy, and gaining a better appreciation of understanding of online harm against children.

This work is important as it contributes to awareness raising and prevention practice with adults and young people informing UK and International policy. The latest research builds upon other similar studies informing child online protection led by Davidson in the UK, EU (EC Safer Internet, 2012 and EC ISEC, 2016 **R5, G1**) and MENA region (EVAC, 2014 (**G2**) and TRA Bahrain, 2010-2016, **R5**) and other current research focusing upon VSP guidance on child online harms in the forthcoming Online Harms Bill (England and Wales, OFCOM, 2020-2021).

## Impact case study (REF3)

Findings from the recent research on adult harms suggest that:

1. The majority of adults experience some form of online hate and many experience online harassment. Online harassment encompasses a broad spectrum of abusive behaviours enabled by technology platforms and used to target a specific user or users;
2. Online harassment can have a lasting impact on those who are victimised, ranging from mental or emotional stress to financial loss and in some cases difficulty in securing employment and housing (**R4**).

This research has been developed further in a study, funded by the DCMS, exploring the role and significance of the UK Safety Technology sector (**R2, G5**). Davidson contributed to this study which highlights significant growth within the sector, with the number of dedicated online safety firms doubling in the last 5 years and investment increasing more than eight-fold in 2019. Findings indicate that UK safety tech providers currently hold an estimated 25% of the global market share and the number of dedicated safety tech firms has doubled in the last 5 years. In 2019, the sector generated GDP226 million in annual revenues, and has grown rapidly. This research (**R2**) is of central importance to the forthcoming UK Online Harms legislation.

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

---

**R1.** Davidson J., DeMarco, J., Bogaerts S., Pace U., Aiken M., Caretti, V., Schimmenti A., Bifulco A. 2020. Exploring policing and industry practice in the prevention of online child sexual abuse, in Bryce, I., and Petherick, W. (eds) *Childhood sexual abuse: forensic issues in evidence, impact, and management*. Academic Press/Elsevier, 657-677. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-819434-8.00030-1>

**R2.** Donaldson, S., Davidson, J., Aiken M. 2020. *Safer technology, safer users: the UK as a world-leader in Safety Tech*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-report-reveals-uk-as-world-leader-in-online-safety-innovation>

**R3.** Davidson, J., Kidron, B., Phillips, K. 2019. *Child online protection in Rwanda*. University of East London and 5Rights Foundation. <https://5rightsfoundation.com/uploads/cop-in-rwanda-report.pdf>

**R4.** Davidson, J., Livingstone, S., Jenkins, S., Gegowski, A., Choak, C., Ike, T., Phillips K. 2019. Adult online hate, harassment and abuse: a rapid evidence assessment. UK Government: UKCIS and the DCMS. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-online-hate-harassment-and-abuse-a-rapid-evidence-assessment>

**R5.** Davidson, J., and Bifulco, A. 2018. *Child abuse and protection: contemporary issues in policy, practice, and research*. Routledge.

**G1.** Julia Davidson, 'Exploration of policing and industry practice in addressing online child abuse', European Commission ISEC fund, 2013, GBP670,000.

**G2.** Julia Davidson, 'Online child safety in the MENA Region', WeProtect, March 2015-March 2016, GBP350,000.

**G3.** Julia Davidson, 'Exploring the context of CSA and CSE offending', Centre of Expertise in Child Abuse/Home Office, February 2016-December 2017, GBP340,000.

**G4.** Julia Davidson, 'Youth Pathways into cybercrime', Europol EC3 and Private investor (VC), March 2016-December 2016, USD100,000.

**G5.** Julia Davidson, 'UK Council for Internet Safety Rapid Evidence Assessment Adult online harms (report to inform white paper on Internet safety)', Department of Culture, Media & Sport, July 2018-June 2019, GBP60,000.

**G6.** Julia Davidson with 5Rights (Baroness Beeban Kidron), 'End violence against children. Development of child online protection policy and implementation plan for the Government of Rwanda, 5Rights, September 2018-April 2019, USD180,000.

**G7.** H2020 (CC Driver), 'Exploring the human and technical drivers of cybercrime, Grant No 883543, May 2020-May 2023, EUR5,000,000. UEL aspect explores youth pathways into cybercrime (EUR816,000 to UEL).

## Impact case study (REF3)

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

Davidson has been working with the Government of Rwanda, University of Rwanda and 5Rights Foundation, supported by the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, to develop a Child Online Protection (COP) Policy (R1) since 2018.

The child online protection policy and plan were adopted in 2019 by the Government (S1, R1) across key areas including: health; criminal justice; education; industry; civil society and in the community. A national awareness raising campaign has been designed to be rolled out through community networks and schools in 2019. This was co-designed with stakeholders in Rwanda, the logo incorporates a grey parrot which symbolises intelligence and is held in high regard in Rwanda. The campaign would have been piloted and evaluated by Davidson and her team earlier in 2020 but was delayed due to the pandemic. The work is being continued in a newly formed Youth Safeguarding Network in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Zambia and South Africa funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund.



Figure 1 Grey parrot logo

The project also included the design of a COP educational module, that was incorporated into the University of Rwanda (UoR) undergraduate community programme from 2020, ensuring that all UG students trained at the University will have awareness of COP issues. As of June 2020, 5000 UG students at the UoR had received the COP training and have brought the key messages to their families and communities. (S2)

#### Child and Adult Online Harms in the UK

Davidson is the Chair of the UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) Evidence Group. The role of the EG is to ensure that UKCIS policy and practice is informed by the most current UK and international research. She is also Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Research Ethics Committee and a Member of the Europol Cybercrime Centre (EC3) Expert Academic Advisory Group. Davidson has undertaken two reviews with Livingstone that have informed recent government policy in this area. The first review undertaken in 2017 informed the Government Green paper on Internet Safety and the most recent review is the first of its kind and contributed to the Govt Online Harms White paper (S3, R4). Davidson was awarded an OBE in the Queens Honours List 2020 for services to Internet safety.

#### The UK Safety Technology (tech) sector

Follow-on research undertaken for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport examined the developing UK Safety Tech sector market. The analysis focused on the development of technology or solutions to facilitate safer online experiences, and to protect users from harmful content, contact or conduct. The report assessed the potential and capability of the UK online safety sector in the context of the commitment set out in the Online Harms White Paper (S6).

A key part of this was the development of a taxonomy which enabled stakeholders to understand what was meant by 'Safety Tech', and its benefits to users. This taxonomy has quickly become the UK industry standard - and has been used by government departments, regulators and industry when describing its products (S3, S4, S5, S6). The taxonomy enabled a systematic economic analysis of the UK Safety Tech sector, which revealed a rapidly growing sector. The past four years have seen external investment in the sector increase more than 800%, to a record year in 2019 with £51m raised (R2).

In response to the report's recommendations (R2), and to capitalise on the sector's success the government announced the following initiatives:

1. A Safety Tech Innovation Network launched in 2020. The world's first forum for safety tech providers;
2. A virtual safety tech expo to showcase safety tech to the world;
3. A safety tech export pilot, run by the Department for International Trade, to include a directory of UK safety tech organisations and exploratory international missions - which can be virtual if necessary' (S5).

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

---

**S1a.** The Rwandan Government implemented the COP policy in June 2019 and approved the 5-year implementation plan. [https://www.primature.gov.rw/index.php?id=43&no\\_cache=1&tx\\_drblob\\_pi1%5BdownloadUid%5D=726](https://www.primature.gov.rw/index.php?id=43&no_cache=1&tx_drblob_pi1%5BdownloadUid%5D=726)

**S1b.** Final policy approval from the Ministry, 24 June 2019.

[https://minict.gov.rw/fileadmin/Documents/Policies2019/COP\\_Policy\\_Updated.pdf](https://minict.gov.rw/fileadmin/Documents/Policies2019/COP_Policy_Updated.pdf)

**S2.** Letter from the Vice Chancellor Professor Philip Coton confirming the University of Rwanda adopted the COP module as part of the teacher training programme starting in September 2020.

**S3.** Testimonial letter from Graham Francis, Policy lead, online safety, Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), confirming the contributions and impact of the two commissioned projects: *Adult online hate, harassment and abuse rapid evidence assessment* and *Safer technology, safer users: the UK as a world-leader in Safety Tech*.

**S4.** Online harms research publications. This page brings together research commissioned by DCMS related to online harms (R4).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/online-harms-research-publications>

Co-author, Professor Sonia Livingstone: (<http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/people/academic-staff/sonia-livingstone>)

**S5.** Press release Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 27 May 2020.

"To further capitalise on the sector's success, and in response to the report's (R2) recommendations, the government is today announcing:

1. A Safety Tech Innovation Network, co-funded by Nominet, to launch later in 2020. This will be the world's first forum for safety tech providers to collaborate and promote their work
2. A virtual safety tech expo to showcase safety tech to the world
3. A safety tech export pilot, run by the Department for International Trade, to include a directory of UK safety tech organisations and exploratory international missions - which can be virtual if necessary."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-report-reveals-uk-as-world-leader-in-online-safety-innovation>

**S6.** "The *Safer technology, safer users* report is an independent research report produced for DCMS by Perspective Economics, a Belfast-based economic advisory company. Independent academic advisory input was provided by Professor Julia Davidson and Professor Mary Aiken (University of East London). The report meets the commitment set out in the Online Harms White Paper to assess the capability and potential of the UK online safety sector".

<https://www.wired->

[gov.net/wg/news.nsf/articles/New+report+reveals+UK+as+world+leader+in+online+safety+innovation+28052020101010?open](https://www.wired-gov.net/wg/news.nsf/articles/New+report+reveals+UK+as+world+leader+in+online+safety+innovation+28052020101010?open)