



# Hotels as Locations of Child Sexual Exploitation

Review of Trends and Practices

White  
Paper



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# Introduction

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a broad term encompassing different forms of sexual crimes against children, all of which have received increased public attention over recent years (Chase & Statham, 2005; Skidmore, 2004; Cockbain & Brayley, 2012; Jay, 2014; Ofsted, 2014; Franklin, Brown & Brady, 2018). Such well-publicised cases as the organised child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham, where at least 1,400 children have been sexually abused between 1997 and 2013 (e.g. BBC, 2018), have drawn public attention to the night-time economy and the role it supposedly plays in this crime. Businesses that operate at night such as taxi companies, fast-food restaurant chains or hotels, are said to be locations, where offenders and victims meet, spend time together or even where exploitation happens. However, there is little research to date into the actual scale and nature of child sexual exploitation in the night-time economy.

CSE is widely acknowledged to be a “hidden crime” (e.g. Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006; Palmer, 2001) due to its sensitive nature and lack of public awareness of it; thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that legitimate businesses within the night-time economy struggle to identify instances of CSE. Nevertheless, recently there have been increased efforts by the government, law enforcement, NGOs and the private sector to raise awareness of CSE and find effective ways to tackle it, including in the hotel sector. In 2019, the Home Office published the Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit - a set of legislative tools available to frontline staff such as law enforcement, education, housing, social care and voluntary sector staff, who work to safeguard children and young people from sexual and criminal exploitation. Additionally, the police Operation MakeSafe, which aims to train hotel staff to spot the signs of CSE, Barnardo’s Nightwatch, which focuses on raising awareness in the night-time economy, including hotels, or the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, which is a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at preventing the sexual exploitation of children, are only a few of the numerous examples of the efforts to fight CSE in the hotel sector.

Environmental criminological theories argue that each crime happens against a unique backdrop of circumstances and opportunities as well as warrants specific countermeasures (see, e.g. Cohen & Felson, 1979; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1993; Felson & Eckert, 2015). Therefore, this paper will first provide an overview of the scale, suggested victim and offender characteristics and nature of exploitation. We will then move on to present an account of the existing countermeasures applicable to countering CSE in hotels specifically. We hope that an overview of the possible ways to contribute to the fight against CSE will enable hotels to apply a wide-range of solutions.

# Background

## Defining child sexual exploitation

Currently there is no unanimously-recognised definition of CSE both globally and nationally in the UK with the four UK nations operating slightly differing definitions of CSE in policy and practice (Kelly & Karsna, 2017; Franklin, Brown & Brady, 2018). In England, the most recent definition of CSE published by the Department for Education (DfE) states that:

**“Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator” (DfE, 2017).**

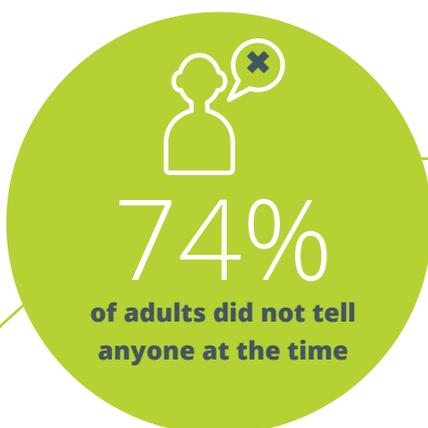
Important to CSE then is the exchange of sexual services for something the victim wants or needs. The latter may be tangible commodities such as cigarettes, alcohol, drugs or money, or less-tangible gains such as affection or “love” (Cockbain & Brayley, 2012). In CSE offenders exploit the victim’s immaturity (emotional, mental or physical) or socioeconomic disadvantage to create an imbalance of power in the relationship (Chase & Statham, 2005). Moreover, coercion, manipulation and deceit, which when exercised by the offender, puts them in a position of power. This, in turn, suggests that sexual activity may appear to be consensual but in reality is exploitative (DfE, 2017). In cases where a young person is old enough to consent to sexual activity, the law stipulates that the consent is only valid when the young person makes a choice freely. Conversely, consent cannot be given when a young person feels like there is no other meaningful choice, they are under the influence of harmful substances or threatened through psychological or physical violence (Kelly & Karsna, 2017).

Although CSE is a term that is most commonly used with regard to the night-time economy, there is no evidence to suggest that other forms of CSA do not happen in the sector. However, to be consistent with the existing literature, we will use the DfE definition of CSE throughout this paper. It should however be noted that while the terms are defined in theory, the lines between them tend to blur in practice. Even the DfE argues that CSE should not be used separately from other forms of CSA or trafficking (DfE, 2017). In fact, public discourse and academia often conflate CSA, CSE and human trafficking involving children, which means that some of the information discussed in this paper may pertain to various forms of CSA.

## Scale

The true scale of CSE remains largely unknown due to recording and reporting issues. Issues with recording consist of a time lag between experiencing CSA and reporting it, a lack of consistency in using the definitions of different forms of CSA, failing to record all reports or varying recording practices across agencies, administrative areas and over time (Kelly & Karsna, 2017). For example, the National Referral Mechanism incorporates all forms of modern slavery and human trafficking and records both adult and child victims. Out of a total of 5145 victims of modern slavery and human trafficking referred to the National Referral Mechanism in 2018, 9.1% (638) were sexually exploited minors (National Crime Agency, 2019). Here the figure does not differentiate between trafficking, CSE or CSA, which adds to the murky picture and a lack of understanding of the prevalence of CSA in general and each of its forms.

Estimating the scale of CSE is also made difficult because victims may be afraid to report abuse, may not know where to seek help, may be ashamed to come forward or may not even be aware that they are being exploited (e.g. Lillywhite & Skidmore, 2006; Palmer, 2001). For this reason the real number of CSE victims may be much larger than any estimate and, in turn, CSE is regarded as a “hidden crime”. In fact, most victims of CSE do not report the crime when it is taking place and many wait until they are adults (Kelly & Karsna, 2017). For example, the 2016 Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey reports that 74% of adults, who had experienced penetrative offenses in childhood, did not tell anyone at the time and only 7% of the cases stated that the police were informed. Embarrassment and humiliation (48%) and fear they would not be believed (38%) were amongst the top reasons for not reporting what had happened (ONS, 2016). This suggests that there is a social stigma attached to CSE, which prevents CSE from being detected, offenders prosecuted and victims assisted.



## Victims and offenders

Generally speaking, girls and young women make up a larger proportion of identified victims of CSA than boys and young men (Kelly & Karsna, 2017). Data from prevalence studies in England and Wales suggest that 15% of girls and young women and 5% of boys and young men experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 16 (including abuse by adults and peers) (Kelly & Karsna, 2017).

**CSE can occur at any age, however, children between the ages of 13 and 17 are said to be most at risk (Jago et al., 2010). Barnardo's, which supports victims of CSA, data show that the average age of abuse varies by gender (Barnardo's, 2014). For example, on average boys tend to be 13.9 years-old and girls 14.6 years-old when they are first referred to the service (Barnardo's, 2014). Also, boys tend to be 14.5 years-old and girls 15.3 years-old when they start receiving support services (Barnardo's, 2014). This suggests that male victims experiencing CSA may be younger than female victims.**

There have also been attempts amongst researchers to identify risk factors that make some children more vulnerable to CSE than others (Alderson, 2016; Franklin, Brown & Brady, 2018). Some of the commonly-listed factors that are said to increase a child's vulnerability to CSE are prior history of sexual abuse, parental negligence, drug or alcohol abuse in the household, experience of violence, history of residential care, drug or alcohol use and homelessness (e.g. Barnardo's, 2011; Coy, 2009; Cusick et al., 2003; Jago et al., 2010; Klatt et al., 2014). However, it is not known whether these are actually risk factors or specific features of certain environments that enable CSE (Franklin, Brown & Brady, 2018). Moreover, focusing on the vulnerability factors associated with children risks diverting attention from the offender and their motivation as well as marginalising the "hidden" groups of children that may not be as commonly identified in CSE cases (Fox, 2016). For instance, although research suggests that the risk for children with disabilities becoming victims of violence is three to four times higher compared to other groups of children, little attention has been paid to their exploitation (Franklin & Smeaton, 2017). Research on vulnerability factors in children also fails to explain why children without the commonly suggested vulnerability factors fall prey to sexual exploitation (Alderson, 2016).

Identified cases of CSA also suggest that the vast majority of perpetrators are male (Kelly & Karsna, 2017), although women can offend too. Research generally differentiates between different types of offenders, namely, situational and opportunistic vs. preferential offenders (Hawke & Raphael, 2016). While the former may find themselves in environments that enable or normalise offending, the latter are motivated by underlying sexual preferences. Child sex offenders can also operate in organised crime groups. For instance, Skidmore et al. (2016) analysed police crime and intelligence data in Bristol and found that around half (192) of a total of 371 CSE perpetrators operated in groups or loose networks made up of people of similar ethnic backgrounds and living in the same community as their victims.

## Exploitation

Sexual exploitation of children can take many forms including (but not limited to) trafficking, prostitution, sexual exploitation by travelling sex offenders or production of pornography (Estes, 2001). Recently the role of the Internet has been emphasised in CSA, which poses relatively low perceived risks to offenders (Kelly & Karsna, 2017). The Internet can be used to find and target potential victims, share child abuse images for sale or in exchange for similar pornographic content (Berelowitz et al., 2012; Kelly & Karsna, 2017, Downey, 2002; Hill, 2003). The online sphere provides perpetrators with anonymity and allows them to create fictitious personalities that aid them in luring children (Chase & Statham, 2015). In this sense, the Internet has become a tool for “grooming” children into sexual exploitation (Barnardo’s, 2002).

The Internet can also provide offenders with an effective way to exert control over their victims. Victims may feel powerless as there is no escape from the reach of the Internet, constantly controlled as the Internet allows the offenders access to their victims at night (even in the comfort of their own home) (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2017). Offenders may also use emotional or image-related blackmail to keep their victims trapped in exploitative relationships (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2017).

Apart from providing relatively easy access to children and means to exert control over victims, the Internet is said to have removed some of the social stigma associated with pornography and paedophilia (Arnaldo, 2001; Kelly & Karsna, 2017). The online sphere allows paedophiles, who are normally marginalized in the society, to connect with each other thereby finding like-minded people and normalizing their sexual preferences (Chase & Statham, 2015).

## Child sexual exploitation in hotels

As previously-mentioned, hotels have been said to have a particular vulnerability to human trafficking including child trafficking (Annison, 2013; Armstrong, 2016; Robinson, 2013; Tuppen, 2013). US National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) found that in 2018 8% of reported sexual exploitation cases concerned hotels, which makes up the third largest category (NHTH, 2019). The Polaris Project reports that in the US between December 2007 and February 2015 out of a total of 1434 reported cases of human trafficking in hotels 45% involved minors (Polaris Project, 2015). Although the above-mentioned statistics reveal that the problem is of growing concern, research on the industry characteristics related to vulnerability remains scarce (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018).

Paraskevas & Brookes (2018) split the factors influencing the hotel sector vulnerability to human trafficking, including child trafficking, into macro, meso and micro-level factors. The macro-level factors are related to the broader socio-political developments such as the current refugee crisis in Europe and the inability of European states to effectively manage their borders (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018). The Observer suggests that more than 900 children seeking asylum have gone missing between 2010 and 2015 in the UK and speculate that many of them have been trafficked for domestic servitude, forced begging and sexual exploitation (McClenaghan & McVeigh, 2015).

Meso-level characteristics centre around the hotel industry itself and the risk of hotels becoming spots for both labour and sex trafficking (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018). Labour intensity, demand elasticity and value distribution have been identified as factors that increase the vulnerability of the sector to child sexual exploitation (Crane, 2013). Paraskevas & Brookes (2018) conducted research into the topic by interviewing key stakeholders in the industry in the UK, Finland and Romania. The stakeholders identified the fragmented and diverse nature of the hotel sector as a key vulnerability whereby coordinated action is hindered by the abundance of actors and varying levels of interest (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018). Crane (2013) also argues that the geographic dispersion and isolation of hotels may make offenders more attracted to them as potential spots for exploitation and, in turn, may make it easier for some hotel managers to turn a blind eye to exploitation on their premises.

Factors related to individual hotel business practices comprise the micro-level characteristics that influence vulnerability to human trafficking. Most of the interviewees in Paraskevas & Brookes' (2018) research identified organisational culture as a key influencing factor to trafficking in hotels. The authors also argue that while the fight against trafficking may be instituted in the business policies, ethics statements or codes of conduct, their practical implementation may be hindered by the commercial and other pressures of the business environment (Paraskevas & Brookes, 2018). This suggests that sole commitment to fight human trafficking is not enough and there should be ways to effectively translate it into practice.

Technology and the Internet is said to play a significant role in increasing the vulnerability of hotels to human trafficking. Traffickers may use technology to advertise the services of women and children with pictures taken in hotel rooms or avoid any contact with the hotel staff by using smartphones to check-in and as room-keys, which then decreases the chances of spotting illegal activity (Paraskevas and Brookes, 2018). In turn, this means that while technology can provide significant benefits to businesses, it can also create additional vulnerabilities exploitable by offenders.

**There is growing pressure on businesses to join the fight against human trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Therefore, private businesses should strengthen their commitment to fight CSE by implementing effective measures in practice. The following section provides an overview of the existing countermeasures that can be used to counter CSE.**



**The fragmented and diverse nature of the hotel sector is a key vulnerability**



**Technology and the Internet play a significant role in increasing the vulnerability of hotels to human trafficking**

# Existing countermeasures

## Legislative basis

In the UK, the legislative basis for prosecuting CSE offenses lies in the **Children Act 1989**, the **Sexual Offenses Act 2003** and the **Serious Crime Act 2015**. The Sexual Offenses Act 2003 defines the commercial exploitation of a child which protects children under the age of 18 from exploitation through pornography and prostitution and introduces a specific offense for “grooming” a child. The Act also differentiates between a child and a young person imposing stricter penalties on offenders exploiting children under 13 years-old (Chase & Statham, 2005). Under the Act the police can also issue a closure notice to premises having reasonable grounds to believe that they are being used for CSE related offenses whereas a full closure order has to be applied for to a Magistrates Court (BLM, 2018). Moreover, the Serious Crime Act (2015) replaces all references to prostitution of children as sexual exploitation. This means that prostitution of children is defined as a separate phenomenon from the prostitution of adults (O’Hara, 2019).

Additionally, there is legislation that pertains specifically to CSE in the hotel sector. Failure to comply on the part of the hotel with the following may result in legislative breaches:

### 1

#### **Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014**

- Sections 116 and 118 allow the police to issue a written notice to the hotel owner, operator or manager if they have reason to believe that the hotel has been or will be used for CSE. Following the notice, the hotel is required to provide information requested by the police that can be used as evidence or intelligence such as guest names, addresses, guest ages, etc.
- The act also allows the police or a local authority to issue a Closure Notice on the business or residential premises, which are being used or could be used for causing nuisance to the members of the public including CSE related activity. An initial notice has the power to shut premises down for 48 hours, after which an extended closure of up to 3 months could only be imposed through the Magistrates Court.

### 2

#### **Licensing Act and Health and Safety legislation**

### 3 Modern Slavery Act 2015

Section 54 comprises a requirement that any commercial organisation within the UK with a global turnover of £36 million or more (including subsidiaries) publishes a slavery and human trafficking statement each financial year which sets out measures safeguarding its supply chains from modern slavery and human trafficking. However, a simple transparency statement admitting that no such steps have been taken is sufficient to comply with the legislation.

## Awareness-raising campaigns

There are numerous awareness-raising campaigns across the UK initiated by the law enforcement, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or cross-sector actors. These campaigns are often aimed at increasing public knowledge of CSE and this way helping members of the public and representatives of specific professions that may face victims of CSE to spot the signs of exploitation.

Targeted approaches to combating CSE in hotels specifically seem to be scarce. Individual police forces and NGOs provide guidance, toolkits and materials for hotels to raise awareness among staff. Although coordinated efforts nationally and within the hotel industry are rare, recent years have witnessed an increase in such targeted efforts. The following three sections summarise the various initiatives conducted by law enforcement, NGOs and a combination of industry stakeholders to counter CSE that are relevant to the hotel industry.

## Law enforcement operations

Apart from reactive investigations into CSE, the police also conducts preventive work on the matter. One notable operation aimed at combating CSE in the hotel industry in the UK is **Operation MakeSafe** (also known as “Say Something if You See Something”). First introduced by South Yorkshire Police to stop CSE in Sheffield hotels, the operation is now being conducted by police forces across the UK, including the London Metropolitan Police, City of London Police and British Transport Police. It is a proactive initiative to empower businesses that may encounter instances of CSE. These include care homes, hotels, fast food restaurants, taxis, transport hubs and licensed premises. The aim is to deliver awareness training to those who work in the sector so they are able to recognise the signs of CSE, identify potential victims and take the necessary action to report their concerns. The staff is encouraged to tell the police by calling 101 or 999 quoting “Operation MakeSafe” so that the law enforcement can then effectively respond to the staff’s concerns and suspicions.

The police has recently carried out checks of the effectiveness of the awareness training provided to businesses. Police officers attempted to check-in to hotels (that had agreed to be part of the operation) with young people. The young people had alcohol with them while the older police officers tried to pay for the rooms in cash. Feedback from the operation suggests that many hotels under review failed these checks (Greenwood, 2018).

## NGO initiatives

NGOs conduct numerous awareness-raising campaigns across the UK targeting both CSE specifically and human trafficking more broadly. Concerning hotels, the STOP THE TRAFFIK **No Room For Trafficking** initiative is aimed at empowering the hospitality industry to understand what trafficking is and how to spot its signs. Although the campaign is not focused specifically on CSE but rather targets all forms of modern slavery, it is an effective example of how awareness of such crimes as human trafficking or CSE could be increased with a specific target audience in mind.

Perhaps the most focused initiative to tackle CSE in hotels is **Barnardo's Nightwatch** - a project that delivered spot the signs trainings to a range of businesses and services that operate within the night-time economy. The campaign that was carried out in 12 sites across England between April 2015 and March 2016 included CSE awareness trainings for frontline workers, distribution of guidance to identify and report CSE as well as community awareness-raising events.

According to the Nightwatch evaluation report building relationships, working in partnership, being flexible with the training delivery as well as tailoring it to specific professions and geographic areas is important to achieve positive results (D'Arcy & Thomas, 2016). The report states that it is important to get to know the local area and gather information on CSE prior to training so as to better fit the needs of the target audience. Therefore, a friendly, non-judgemental and flexible approach could prove effective in raising awareness amongst the staff of businesses operating at night.

## Cross-sector partnerships

Awareness-raising and spot the signs campaigns are also initiated by joint efforts from different actors within the industry from private businesses such as hotels to intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations (UN). These campaigns have differing reach and target audiences. Some initiatives have a clearly defined geographical scope, for instance, **It's Not Okay** in Greater Manchester or **See Me, Hear Me!** in the West Midlands. Additionally, there are campaigns targeting the hotel or the travel and tourism sector specifically such as the **Hotel Watch, Passport to Freedom** or the **Shiva Foundation**; however, their focus lies not only in CSE but other crimes including human trafficking and modern slavery. Apart from raising awareness and providing a platform for cooperation for various stakeholders in the industry, some of these campaigns find innovative solutions to contribute to fighting crime, including CSE, in their businesses. For example, the Shiva Foundation launched a Stop Slavery Blueprint, which is a free online tool to help hotels tackle the risk of modern slavery in their business and supply chains.

On an international level, **International Tourism Partnership** provides a non-competitive platform for hotel industry leaders to share ideas, build partnerships and work collaboratively to make the industry transparent and responsible. Also, the **UN Global Compact** is a voluntary initiative that supports companies in conducting business responsibly aligning their strategies and operations with 10 principles on human rights, labour and anti-corruption. UN Global Compact operates both globally and locally with local representation available in member states. It is a network connecting local businesses. Although they do not focus specifically on child rights or preventing CSE but these issues can be said to be a part of the

guiding principles of UN Global Compact. Together with UNICEF and Save the Children, UN Global Compact has developed **Children's Rights and Business Principles** to guide companies on the range of actions they can take in the workplace, marketplace and community to respect and support children's rights. The principles include examples of best practices that businesses can adopt to support children's rights such as requiring all suppliers to agree to a legally binding clause in their contracts denouncing the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Additionally, the **Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism** is a multi-stakeholder initiative with the mission to provide awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. It is funded by UNICEF and supported by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). More than 300 tourism companies worldwide, including hotels, are members of the Code. These members can access the tools and materials created by the Code team, for instance:

- Member portal, which serves as an online action plan and guides the members through their implementation process – from writing staff policy and training staff through to completing an annual report.
- Interactive online training consisting of e-learning modules, which train staff on how to recognize the signs of child sexual exploitation and respond to suspected cases. The e-learning program is now available in 10 different languages.

The Code operates through a network of local representatives in member countries with the UK being represented by ECPAT UK. Together with the Association of British Travel Agents, ECPAT UK has developed **Every Child, Everywhere** - an e-learning course focused on safeguarding children from exploitation in travel and tourism, preventing child exploitation and abuse, including child trafficking. Every Child, Everywhere has been mapped against National Occupational Standards for Continued Professional Development points in the ABTA Accredited Travel Professional Training scheme. This interactive, simple to use course focuses on following, implementing and developing child protection policies and procedures.



**Awareness-raising and spot the signs campaigns are initiated by joint efforts from different actors within the industry**

## Information technology solutions

Increasingly technology is being used to raise awareness of CSE and investigate CSE offenses. Charities provide online chats, tools and resources for both professionals and members of the public, who may face CSE victims, as well as children, who may be lured into CSE. For instance, Barnardo's and Microsoft have developed the **Wud U?** app - a free educational tool that aims to show young people the kind of behaviour that could place them at risk of sexual exploitation through illustrated and interactive stories.

Technology is also being used to identify victims of CSE. **Hotels 50-K dataset** allows investigators to compare CSE images against real-life hotel photographs which, in turn, helps them identify exploitation locations, potential trafficking routes and eventually locate the victims. The dataset contains over 1 million hotel room images across 50,000 hotels captured from travel websites or uploaded by individual members of the public to a mobile phone app called **TraffickCam**. This means that the database contains images that resemble real-life environments and have a greater chance of being matched with exploitation footage.

## Design solutions

Design solutions to any type of crime are largely based on the criminological concept called Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED relies on the notion that offender's choice of whether or not to commit a crime depends on the perceived risk of being caught (Jefferey, 1977). Therefore, by placing environmental or design cues that signal a high risk of detection and apprehension, one can reduce the likelihood of crime. Although when initially coined in 1970s CPTED was largely ignored, it has grown in popularity over the recent years. Police forces across the UK have incorporated principles of CPTED into their Secured by Design initiatives, which aim to improve the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings through the network of their Designing Out Crime Officers (DOCO).

Toren Consulting has met with Metropolitan Police Service DOCOs in the course of the company's core activity of security design consultancy. For hotel developments the DOCO has made a number of recommendations aimed at reducing the vulnerability of hotels against use for CSE, including:

- Human and video surveillance of the entrance lobby;
- Video surveillance of alternative entrance routes;
- Denial of use of unintended entrance routes, e.g. by ensuring that fire escapes are only accessible in emergency.

In line with CPTED, many of the already-existing electronic security measures typically deployed by hotels can provide a deterrence to CSE and assist in the detection and investigation of CSE as they would with other crimes. For example, most hotel lobbies feature at least one video surveillance camera. While cameras may not be installed for the purpose of countering CSE, they may assist in creating a sense of surveillance and, thus, risk of detection to the offender. If a criminal understands that their image is likely to be recorded as they register at a hotel or transit the lobby, they may be deterred from committing a range of crimes including CSE.

Expansion of video surveillance to monitor other routes to hotel rooms can also assist in deterring illicit access for criminal purposes. For example, hotel fire escapes are said to be used by offenders as an alternative to using populated routes and means of avoiding detection. In CSE, fire escapes are also said to be used to get victims and paying “clients” into hotel rooms unnoticed. Therefore, providing video surveillance of hotel fire escapes can deter criminals from using them to bypass the lobby. Additionally, denial of the use of fire escapes and other unintended access routes as a means of entering a hotel and avoiding human and video surveillance can be supported by removing legitimate access to those stairs from guest floors. Also, providing a notification when the stairs are used such as requiring an emergency green break glass to be pressed in order to access the stairs or connecting that device to a local sounder and/or security monitoring station to summon a response if the door is opened, could alert hotel security staff of fire escape usage and, in turn, increase the chances of detecting suspicious activity.

More technologically advanced solutions could also be deployed, but we acknowledge that these are likely to be unattractive to hotel operators for a variety of reasons including relatively high costs of installation and maintenance. For example, where guest-floor corridors include video surveillance, those cameras could provide an alternative means of detecting people approaching fire escape stair doors through video analytics. Additionally, more advanced video analytics could help flag suspicious behaviour such as high numbers of people visiting a single hotel room in a short time-frame. Also, facial recognition could be used to ensure access to hotel rooms is granted only to their guests or potentially to detect people against a database of missing persons or a blacklist of known criminals or fugitives (Marr, 2018; 4 Use Cases of Facial Recognition in the Hospitality Industry, 2019). We note that such database sharing may require policy changes but similar arrangements do exist, for example, sharing number plate information for police purposes.

While technologically-advanced solutions provide significant benefits to the security of hotel guests and employees, they can also help businesses improve efficiency and customer service.

**For example, Cherokee Nation Entertainment installed video analytics across their casinos and hotels to reduce the number of hours their security staff spent reviewing security footage while searching for persons of interest (Using Video Analytics to Create Efficiencies, 2018).**

Also, video surveillance and artificial intelligence can help improve customer service by automatically identifying patterns in video footage of apparently random spikes in guest traffic, aggregating and analysing this data and helping predict the necessary numbers of staff working in specific areas at specific times (How Video Surveillance and IoT Combine to Benefit Hospitality, 2018). Moreover, facial recognition can be used to improve the check-in process. For instance, in 2018 Marriott International rolled out its facial recognition software for checking-in at two of its hotels in China which was said to reduce the check-in time, increase efficiency and improve customer service (Wang, 2018). Thus, while at first glance design solutions may seem costly, they can provide significant value to businesses at the same time helping prevent and detect instances of CSE.

# Conclusion

CSE is a sensitive and complex crime, which perhaps also leads to it being “hidden” from the public eye. However, governmental and NGO data suggests that CSE is an ever-present problem and can happen anywhere, including hotels. To assist in reducing the vulnerability of hotels for use in CSE activities, hotel designers and operators could consider the following:



Familiarising yourself and the hotel staff with relevant CSE legislation pertaining to hotels and this way empowering yourself and your employees to act when faced with suspicious behaviour;



Taking part in awareness-raising campaigns initiated by the law enforcement (e.g. Operation MakeSafe), NGOs (e.g. Barnardo’s Nightwatch) or cross-sector partnerships (e.g. Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism);



Making use of IT solutions such as TraffikCam to contribute to the creation of a vast database of hotel images, which would aid CSE detection and victim identification;



Implementing design solutions, for instance, increasing natural surveillance by limiting public access to remote routes, extending video surveillance to various parts of the hotel and installing video analytics and face recognition.

Each of the proposed solutions has potential to make a difference in countering CSE; however, a combination of multiple measures has perhaps the greatest chance of safeguarding your hotel and its guests against this crime.

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