

**SPECIFICATION****Rapid Evidence Assessment: Behaviour and Characteristics of Perpetrators of  
Online-Facilitated Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation****1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The Research Project at the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) is seeking to commission a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) to identify what is known about the behaviour and characteristics of perpetrators of online-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- 1.2. IICSA are procuring a Contractor with expert knowledge of the subject area and a proven track record of delivering high quality REAs for government or other high profile clients.

**2. Background**

- 2.1. IICSA was established in 2015 to investigate whether public bodies and other, non-state institutions have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse in England and Wales. IICSA will identify institutional failings where they are found to exist, demand accountability for past institutional failings, and support victims and survivors to share their experience of sexual abuse. IICSA will also make practical recommendations to ensure that children are given the care and protection they need.
- 2.2. The IICSA is composed of three strands: the Public Hearings, the Truth Project and the Research Project. The Research Project aims to generate new insight into both current and non-recent child sexual abuse that will help to inform the IICSA's recommendations, as well as leaving a legacy of research reports and tools/approaches on which other researchers and practitioners can build. This aim will be achieved through a combination of drawing together existing research and extracting new learning from the synthesised evidence base; conducting secondary analysis of existing datasets; and undertaking primary research to fill key evidence gaps and broaden our knowledge about child sexual abuse. During the course of its work the Inquiry will be examining data on the perspectives and experiences of victims and survivors, perpetrators of child sexual abuse, and professionals working with children in the institutions under investigation, amongst other groups.

- 2.3. The Research Project is being developed and delivered by an experienced research team, working in partnership with IICSA colleagues. It is being overseen by an independent Academic Advisory Board (AAB), chaired by Professor Jenny Pearce OBE from the University of Bedfordshire. The AAB are responsible for providing advice and guidance on topics, methods and outputs as well as granting the research projects ethical approval. The Research Project will be delivered through a combination of in-house and externally commissioned work.
- 2.4. Further information about IICSA, including the Research Project, can be found at: [www.iicsa.org.uk](http://www.iicsa.org.uk)

### 3. Objectives

- 3.1. In November 2015, the IICSA announced its first set of investigations. In the statement, it was noted that there are two categories of investigation:
- 3.1.1. The first is institution specific, involving inquiries into particular institutions or types of institution. In this category, the IICSA plans to:
- investigate failings to protect children in the care or supervision of Lambeth Council, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Councils, and Rochdale Council
  - investigate child sexual abuse in the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches
  - examine the case of Medomsley Youth Detention Centre and consider the extent to which custodial institutions in general have failed to protect children from sexual abuse
  - conduct a wide ranging investigation into sexual abuse in residential schools
- 3.1.2. The second category concerns a series of thematic investigations into broad areas of contemporary concern where multiple institutions may play a role in protecting children from abuse. In this category, the IICSA will:
- investigate child sexual abuse associated with the internet
  - build on the body of work already conducted into the sexual exploitation of children by organised networks
  - investigate the extent to which institutions in England and Wales are effectively discharging their responsibilities to protect children abroad
  - consider the adequacy of existing services for providing support and reparations to victims and survivors
  - conduct an overarching investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse by certain people of public prominence associated with Westminster

- 3.2. IICSA's Research Project will support these investigations with high quality research to provide context and identify gaps in knowledge. The first step in this process is to understand what we already know about child sexual abuse in institutional settings or with an institutional dimension.
- 3.3. The Research Project will share details of research already delivered, in progress, or planned internally with the appointed Contractor as appropriate, for the avoidance of duplication. Providers will be expected to treat any such details of unpublished research confidentially. Providers will also wish to note that there is a complementary rapid evidence assessment on victims of online child sexual abuse that is being commissioned concurrently.
- 3.4. The REA to which this Invitation to Tender relates will inform IICSA's investigation into the Internet and Child Sexual Abuse. More information about the scope of the investigation into the Internet and Child Sexual Abuse can be found at <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/sites/default/files/the-internet-and-child-sexual-abuse.pdf>.

#### 4. Research Questions

- 4.1. The focus of this contract will be on identifying evidence about the demographic characteristics (including age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability) and offence characteristics (eg. offending history, psychological traits) of those who perpetrate online-facilitated sexual abuse and exploitation of children. This should include risk factors for online and offline sexual offending and reoffending.
- 4.2. The overarching question that this procurement seeks to answer is: *What is known about the behaviour and characteristics of people who sexually abuse or exploit children, where such abuse is facilitated by the Internet?*
- 4.3. The procurement should also address the following sub-questions:
- 4.3.1. The REA should consider how offenders use specific technologies, including social media platforms, gaming, peer-to-peer file sharing, live streaming, and the Darknet/TOR.
- How has the availability of these technologies - and the availability and changing nature of social media - influenced offenders' behaviour?
  - How do offenders identify and target potential victims on these different forums?
  - What are the key safeguarding challenges for institutions that are raised by these new/developing technologies and associated offender behaviour?
- 4.3.2. The REA should seek to identify evidence regarding emerging

(sub-)types of offences, especially those involving children's self-generated sexual images or material, including:

- The role of self-generated sexual material in sexual solicitation, exploitation and abuse of children.
- Sexual extortion, where the threat of sharing self-generated sexual material (eg. by posting it on social media) is used to blackmail children into performing sexual acts (or for other gain to the perpetrator).
- Offences in which self-generated sexual material shared online by children (freely, and not as a result of sexual extortion) is identified and circulated by perpetrators with an interest in child sexual exploitation material.

4.3.3. Specific consideration should be given to children who perpetrate online-facilitated sexual abuse and exploitation against peers.

4.3.4. We are also interested in:

- the relationship between different types of offending, eg. between viewing or sharing child sexual exploitation material, and perpetrating solicitation offences
- pathways into offending. eg. the interaction between viewing extreme (adult) pornography (whether legal or illegal) and viewing child sexual exploitation material; the relationship between sexual attraction to children and perpetrating sexual offences against children

4.4. In answering all the above questions, the REA should seek to identify evidence about demographic and other characteristics of perpetrators of online-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation, and how these relate to risk factors and offending behaviour.

4.5. We recognise that some of these questions are not addressed by any extant published or 'grey' literature, and cannot therefore be robustly answered within the scope of this REA. Part of the purpose of the REA is to identify and clearly articulate gaps in the literature. We welcome responses that demonstrate an understanding of how to approach an analysis of evidence gaps, and of how the appointed Contractor will present this in their research outputs.

## **5. Scope**

5.1. The purpose of this contract will be to synthesise the existing evidence base relevant to the questions in paragraphs 4.1 - 4.4 above, extract the key findings, and identify any pertinent gaps in our current evidence that the IICSA may wish to seek to fill in the future. It is critical that the review is comprehensive and robust, but also timely. The appointed Contractor must

therefore use an REA methodology (see paragraph 5.1 for more information).

- 5.2. The appointed Contractor should make use of existing evidence reviews in this area, but maintain a focus on the specific research questions outlined in paragraphs 4.1 - 4.4 above. The approach should be transparent and consideration given to the quality and relevance of research.
- 5.3. The appointed Contractor will not be required to undertake any primary research.
- 5.4. The appointed Contractor will be required to develop and agree the literature search strategy for this project with IICSA following the project inception meeting (see below for further detail). The search should be conducted using appropriate academic search engines, based on a number of key-word combinations agreed with the IICSA Research Project.
- 5.5. In light of the rapidly changing nature of online offending, and the existence of recent, high quality literature reviews, priority should be given to research published in the last five years. Where older evidence is considered, the written report should identify any potential limitations to its relevance to the present context (eg. technological advances).
- 5.6. The appointed Contractor should carry out searches of 'grey' literature, that is published by organisations other than academic journals. This will be particularly important for the period from 2014 onwards in order that the literature reviewed is as up to date as possible. All literature will be assessed against the agreed quality criteria.
- 5.7. It may transpire that some or many of the research questions cannot be fully answered by the existing published or 'grey' literature. Where this is the case, the IICSA would expect the appointed Contractor to clearly state the limitations of the evidence, and the evidence gaps, in their outputs.
- 5.8. The written report should draw out evidence relevant to the range of institutions, systems and governance arrangements under investigation by the IICSA, including, but not limited to: government, regulators, internet service providers, providers of online platforms and other relevant software companies, law enforcement agencies, and the criminal justice system.
- 5.9. Where the REA draws on research from other jurisdictions, the written report should identify any salient differences that could affect the relevance of the findings to England and Wales.
- 5.10. Wherever possible, data should be presented discretely for different types of offence (ie. with a clear distinction between the characteristics of perpetrators of child sexual exploitation material offences, as opposed to perpetrators of online solicitation offences).

## 6. Approach

### *Method*

- 6.1. The research questions should be answered using an REA methodology. REAs are routinely used by government and other bodies as a means of identifying, assessing and synthesising the existing evidence base in a rigorous and structured way. They are not as exhaustive or time consuming as full systematic reviews. An REA toolkit produced by the UK Civil Service (containing extensive information about the REA approach) can be found at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140305122816/http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/networks/gsr/resources-and-guidance/rapid-evidence-assessment>
- 6.2. REAs involve the development of a comprehensive search strategy (including search parameters, terms and databases/sites) which should be piloted, and refined if necessary, before use. In the case of this contract, both social science and historical databases/sites should be included in the search. Tenderers should also outline their proposed approach to searching and identifying 'grey' literature.
- 6.3. Tenderers are required to provide details of their proposed search strategy in their tender submission. The final strategy will need to be refined following the inception meeting and signed off by IICSA before use.
- 6.4. REAs also involve the systematic sifting of identified literature for relevance and quality prior to inclusion in the review. Tenderers are required, as part of their tender submission, to outline how they would assess the quality of the literature identified, and how they would weight the evidence and establish a threshold for inclusion. The appointed Contractor will be required to develop templates to record their assessment of the relevance and quality of each piece of literature sifted, and the weighting given to it as a result, such templates to be agreed with IICSA. On completion of searches, and prior to the report-writing stage, the appointed Contractor will be required to share a database of search results and completed inclusion/exclusion templates for quality assurance by the IICSA research team.
- 6.5. In the event that there is insufficient high quality literature to address one or more of the research questions, inclusion and exclusion criteria may be relaxed. Any such proposed change to criteria or search strategy should be subject to agreement with IICSA.
- 6.6. Tenderers are also required to outline in detail in their proposal their approach to analysing the sifted literature, identifying the key themes and writing them up in the final report.

## *Ethics*

- 6.7. The proposal should include an assessment of any ethical considerations that might arise in the course of this work, and how these will be addressed. Tenderers must comply with the IICSA Research Code of Ethics and ethical approval process, and must complete the ethical approval form (Appendix A of this Specification). The IICSA also requires the appointed Contractor to go through their own internal ethics approval process before the literature identification process begins, and to submit evidence of this to IICSA.

## **7. Outputs and Performance Measures**

- 7.1. The main outputs of this contract will be the following:
- 7.1.1. A work plan (methodology, timeline, search strategy including terms and databases to be used and inclusion/exclusion criteria, ethical approval form)
  - 7.1.2. A zipped file containing all documents summarised and synthesised as part of the review (where electronic copies are available), along with a completed evidence template for each reviewed document, and the final populated grid (or other tool) used for data extraction and analysis.
  - 7.1.3. A detailed report structure for approval by the IICSA Project Lead prior to the report writing phase.
  - 7.1.4. A draft written report for submission to the IICSA internal review process. This must be a near-final version, with all sections (see (v) below) complete, except for the executive summary, which may be completed following the first round of comments, subject to negotiation with the IICSA Project Lead. Draft reports submitted with missing or incomplete sections will be returned without comment.
  - 7.1.5. A concise and accessible written report of publishable quality that addresses the research questions in section 4 above and draws out key findings for the IICSA, as well as flagging gaps in the current evidence base. The report should contain an executive summary; introduction; brief methodology section; substantive chapters; and conclusion. The appendices should contain detailed methodological information, a summary (including quality assessment) of all included literature, and the research instruments.
  - 7.1.6. Presentation of findings to the IICSA, including a slide pack for the IICSA's internal use.
- 7.2. Tenderers are asked to outline the quality assurance and business continuity procedures in place within their organisation(s) and the mechanisms by which they will ensure the project outputs delivered to IICSA are consistently high quality, and any risks to quality delivery are anticipated and mitigated. If

Tenderers hold any quality accreditation (such as ISO 9001 or ISO 20252) it should be stated in their bids.

- 7.3. The IICSA has an established sign-off process for research reports which includes inviting feedback from internal colleagues and the IICSA's Academic Advisory Board (AAB), and quality assurance through external peer review. The process will involve receipt and incorporation of three rounds of comments on the report; two from IICSA staff and the AAB, and one from the external peer reviewers. Tenderers should refer to Appendix B for further details. Tenderers will be expected to reflect the time required for completion of this process in the timescales and costings proposed in their bid.
- 7.4. IICSA anticipate that the report will be IICSA branded; IICSA will provide the appointed Contractor with guidance on format and style of the report. The report will initially and primarily be for internal use. If published, however, the report will be published on the IICSA website.

## **8. Partnership working and project management**

- 8.1. The IICSA Research Team takes a collaborative, partnership approach to working with its providers in order to ensure the research outputs meet its needs and are of the highest quality possible. IICSA therefore expect to have the opportunity to provide advice and guidance at every stage of project delivery, as well as to sign off key elements of the methodology and outputs before use (including the search strategy, quality assessment criteria and presentation slides, as well as the final report).
- 8.2. The project will be managed on the IICSA side by a member of the Research Team who will also be the primary day-to-day contact for the appointed Contractor. The appointed Contractor will be required to provide weekly updates to the IICSA Research Team contact. This will likely be a brief weekly written report, followed up by a phonecall as necessary. The precise format of updates will be agreed at project inception.
- 8.3. Tenderers are required to factor in at least two face-to-face meetings at IICSA's London offices (for the inception meeting and presentation of findings). There will also be a wrap-up meeting at the end of the project. If the appointed Contractor is based outside London or is otherwise unable to attend the wrap-up meeting in person, tele- or videoconferencing will be possible.
- 8.4. IICSA intends to establish an internal steering group to oversee the delivery of the project and provide input at appropriate points. Steering group members will be invited to attend part of the inception meeting, presentation of findings, and final project wrap-up meeting.
- 8.5. With the exception of the inception meeting, presentation of findings, and wrap-up meeting, the location of the services will be at the appointed Contractor's premises.



## **9. Provider skills, experience and resource**

- 9.1. IICSA is seeking a research provider with expert knowledge of the subject area of child protection and child sexual abuse and a proven track record of delivering high quality REAs for government or other high profile clients. Tenderers should include evidence of this expertise and experience as part of their proposal.
- 9.2. Proposed staff assigned to this project must have the relevant qualifications and experience to deliver the contract.
- 9.3. The appointed Contractor shall ensure that their proposed staff understand the IICSA vision and objectives and shall ensure that they provide excellent customer service to the IICSA throughout the duration of the Contract.
- 9.4. The IICSA requires the appointed Contractor to provide a sufficient level of resource throughout the duration of this contract in order to consistently deliver a quality service to all Parties.
- 9.5. Tenderers should be aware that a complementary and concurrently commissioned rapid evidence assessment on victims of online child sexual abuse is being advertised on Contracts Finder as a separate procurement. Tenderers are welcome to bid for both procurements, however a separate and fully completed tender must be completed for each. If tenderers bid for both projects, they must be able to demonstrate that they have resource to complete both projects concurrently.

## **10. Consortium bids**

- 10.1. IICSA encourages tenders from consortia, who bring together subject matter expertise with strong project delivery experience.
- 10.2. Where two or more organisations wish to tender for this project as a consortium, one must be designated as the Lead Contractor. The Lead Contractor will be the main point of contact for the IICSA.
- 10.3. The proposal should make clear how responsibilities will be split between the Lead Contractor and members of the consortium, and should outline how effective partnership delivery will be managed.
- 10.4. Consortium members will be required to attend the project inception meeting, presentation of findings and wrap-up meeting.
- 10.5. As outlined in the Instructions to Tenderers, the Lead Contractor must declare any conflicts of interest that may apply to both itself and / or any consortium member, and also confirm that they adhere to the requirements outlined in the IICSA Research Code of Ethics (Appendix A of this Specification).

## 11. Payment milestones

11.1. Tender prices should be exclusive of travel and subsistence (T&S) and exclusive of Value Added Tax (VAT). T&S costs are payable at the rates shown at Annex D of this Invitation to Tender (ITT) for exceptional circumstances, where travel is required outside of the usual place of work and must have the approval of the IICSA prior to booking.

11.2. Payment by the IICSA will be in accordance with the successful delivery of outputs at the particular milestones outlined in the table below. Note that timescales are indicative.

Milestone	Description of Milestone Activity	Timescale (indicative)	Payment
1	Detailed work plan submitted and approved by the IICSA	28th September	10%
2	Searches completed. Database of results with inclusion / exclusion assessments submitted	19th October	30%
3	Draft report submitted to the IICSA	19th December	40%
4	Report accepted by the IICSA to be satisfactory and of publishable quality	By end February 2017	20%

11.3. To be deemed 'satisfactory' the outputs must be delivered within agreed timescales and be of a quality acceptable to the IICSA.

11.4. Before payment can be considered, each invoice must include a detailed elemental breakdown of work completed and the associated costs.

## 12. Quality

12.1. Tenderers are required to outline in their proposals the quality assurance procedures in place within their organisation(s) and the mechanisms by which they will ensure that the project outputs delivered to IICSA are of a consistently high quality.

12.2. Final decisions about whether the required quality thresholds (as described in paragraphs 4 and 5 of this Specification) have been met, will be the responsibility of the IICSA. Payment will not be made until these thresholds are met.

## 13. Definitions

13.1. Tenderers should have reference to the IICSA glossary: <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/sites/default/files/glossary.pdf>. Terms not included in the glossary are defined below.

Expression or Acronym	Definition
Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)	A methodology used in the identification, quality assessment and synthesis of existing literature on a particular topic. It is more structured and rigorous than a standard literature review, but not as exhaustive as a systematic review.
Child Sexual Abuse	<p>Sexual abuse of children involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. The activities may involve physical contact and noncontact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet. Child sexual abuse can be carried out by an adult or another child (known as peer abuse).</p> <p>Child sexual abuse includes child sexual exploitation.</p>
Child Sexual Exploitation	Sexual exploitation of children is a form of child sexual abuse. It involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where a child receives something, as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology. As with other forms of child sexual abuse, the exploitation can be carried out by an adult or another child.
Online- / internet-facilitated child sexual abuse	<p>Child sexual abuse where the online environment is involved at any stage of the offence. This includes both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The production, preparation, consumption, sharing, dissemination or possession of child sexual abuse material.</li> <li>■ The online sexual solicitation of children (sometimes called 'grooming'), whether or not this results, or is intended to result, in a contact offence.</li> </ul>
Extreme pornography	Pornographic material featuring adults that explicitly depicts subjects such as rape or other non-consensual penetration, serious or life-threatening injury, bestiality, or necrophilia.

## **APPENDIX A**

**REFERS TO 'IICSA RESEARCH CODE OF ETHICS' ATTACHED SEPARATELY**

## **APPENDIX B**

**REFERS TO THE 'PEER REVIEW PROCESS' ATTACHED SEPARATELY**