



Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA): Dilemmas and Prospects for Child Safeguarding Practitioners

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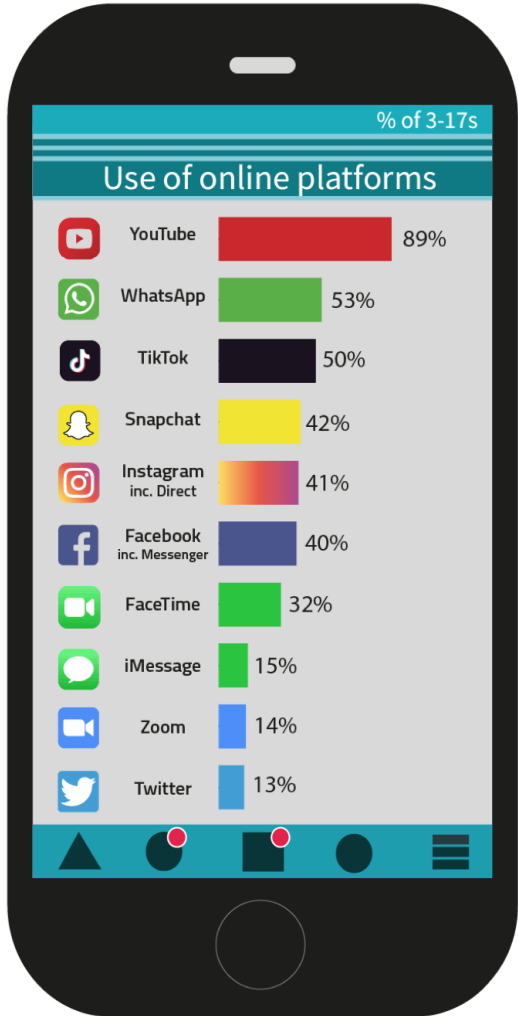
Centre for Child Protection



Thinking about the Use, Misuse, Abuse
and Non-use of....

THE INTERNET

FACTS AND FIGURES



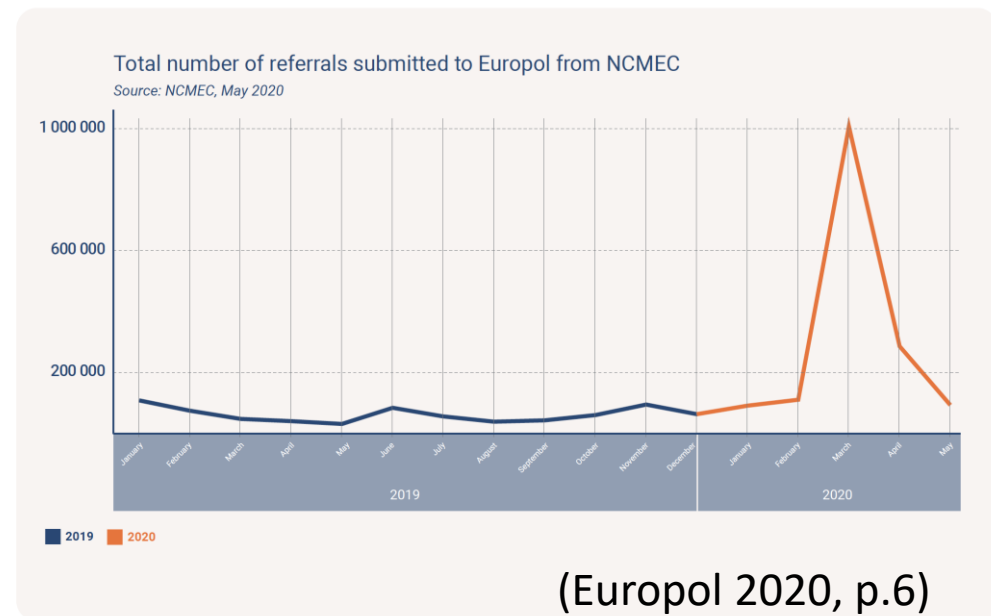
- **Nearly all UK children (99%) aged 3-17 accessed internet during 2021**
- **62% of children aged 8-17 had more than 1 profile on online apps/sites**
- **9 in 10 children owned a mobile phone by the age of 11**
- **7 in 10 parents of under 16-year-olds expressed concern about the content their children saw online**
- **More than a third of children aged 8-17 who gamed online played with people they didn't know (36%)**
- **More than a third (36%) of children aged 8-17 said they saw something 'worrying or nasty' online in the past 12 months**

(Ofcom, 2022)

(Image Source: Ofcom 2022, p.24)

FACTS AND FIGURES

- There were reports of 85 million child abuse photos and videos in 2021 alone (European Commission, 2022)
- The National Crime Agency (NCA) estimate there are between 550,000 to 850,000 people in the UK who pose a sexual risk to children (Home Office, 2022)
- In 2021 the police recorded 33,974 obscene publications offences in the UK (Home Office, 2022)
- 2.88 million accounts were registered globally across the most harmful child sexual abuse dark web sites, with at least 5% believed to be registered in the UK as per NCA records (Home Office, 2019)
- Significant increase in CSEA activity on surface web and dark web during Covid-19 lockdown (Europol, 2020)



OCSEA can
take the
form of..

Grooming a child online for sexual activities

Creating, storing, sharing indecent images
of children

Cyber flashing

Live streaming of sexual activities

Sextortion



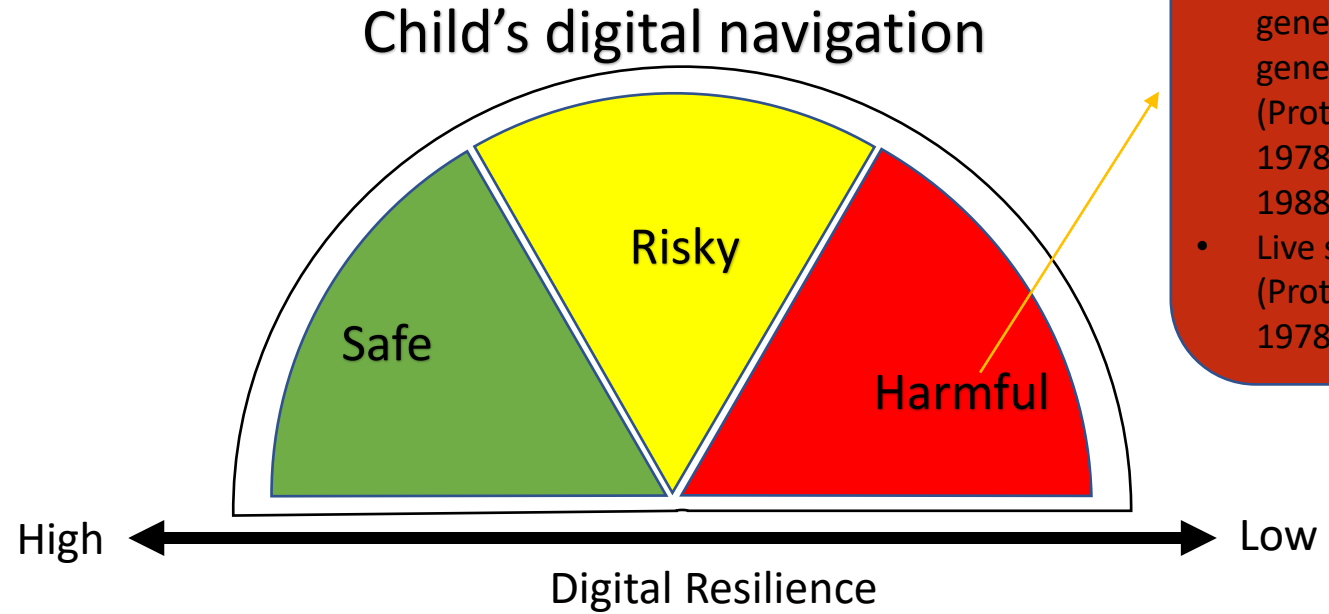
Complexity of OCSEA



Complexity of OCSEA

- The speed, the scale, the self reinforcement, the amplification of contact and content on the internet
- Dark web users use technological advancements to evade detection
- The sense of security for victims and perpetrators when online
- Construction of children as unreal
- Online to offline transition of risk/harm
- Sexting and self generated sexualized images
- Repeated exposure normalizes sexualization
- Economic interests
- Unregulated tech industry
- Figures are only a tip of the iceberg
- Challenges to the 'harm' narrative

“In the street they’re real,
in a picture they’re not.”
(Rimer 2019, p.166)



- Sexual grooming (Sexual Offences Act 2003)
- CSEAM online: First generation content or self generated content (Protection of Children Act 1978; Criminal Justice Act 1988)
- Live streaming of CSEA (Protection of Children Act 1978)

Online Harm Riskometer

“Digital resilience is a dynamic personality asset that grows from digital activation i.e. through engaging with appropriate opportunities and challenges online, rather than through avoidance and safety behaviours.”

(UK Council of Internet Services [UKCIS]2020, p.4)

Semina Halliwell 2021

Olly Stephens 2021

Mia Janin 2021

Molly Russell 2017

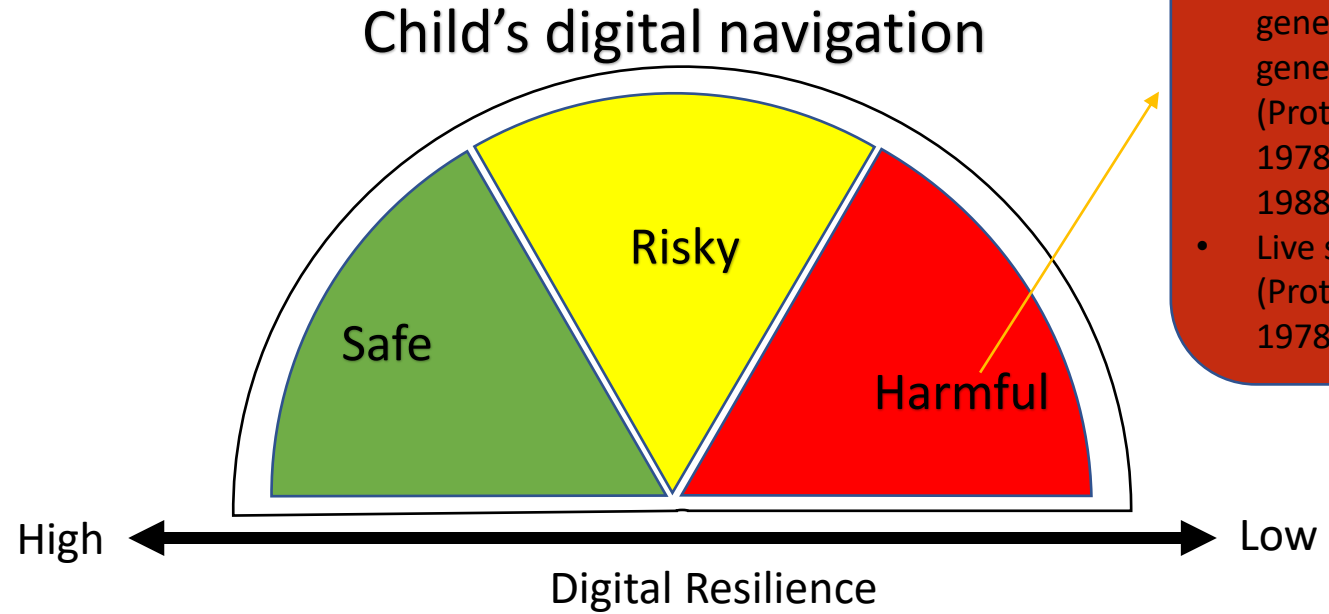
Breck Bednar 2014

Tallulah Wilson 2014

Hannah Smith 2013

Lives lost are a stark
reminder of the potential
harm social media can
cause...





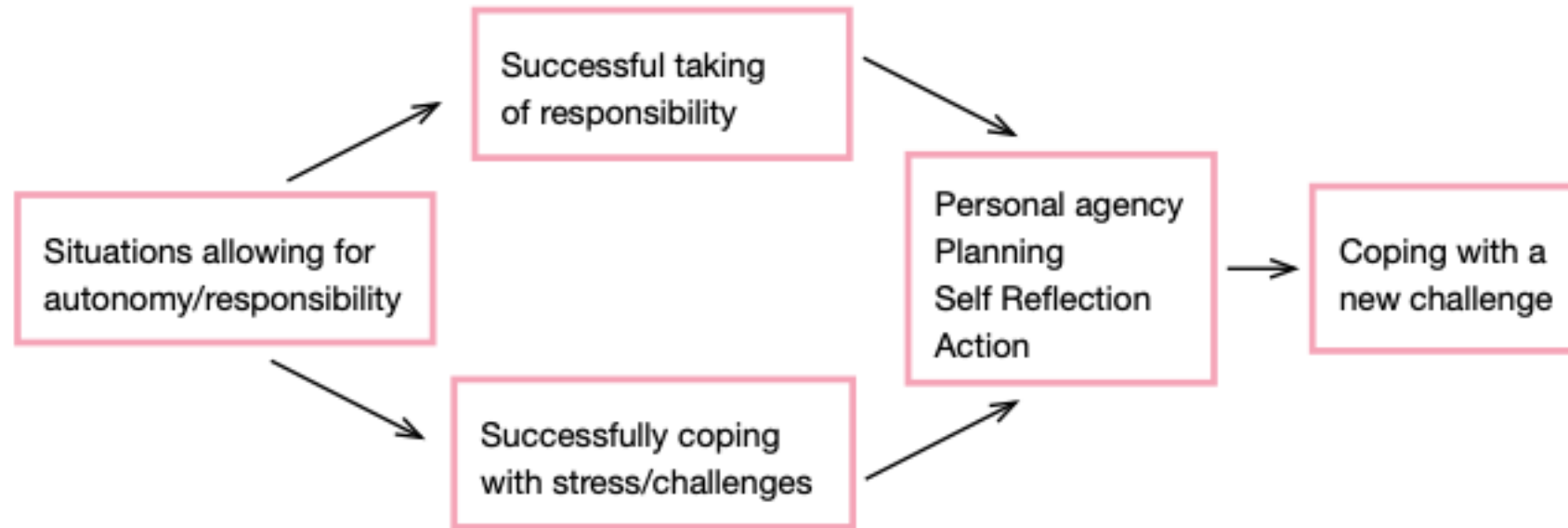
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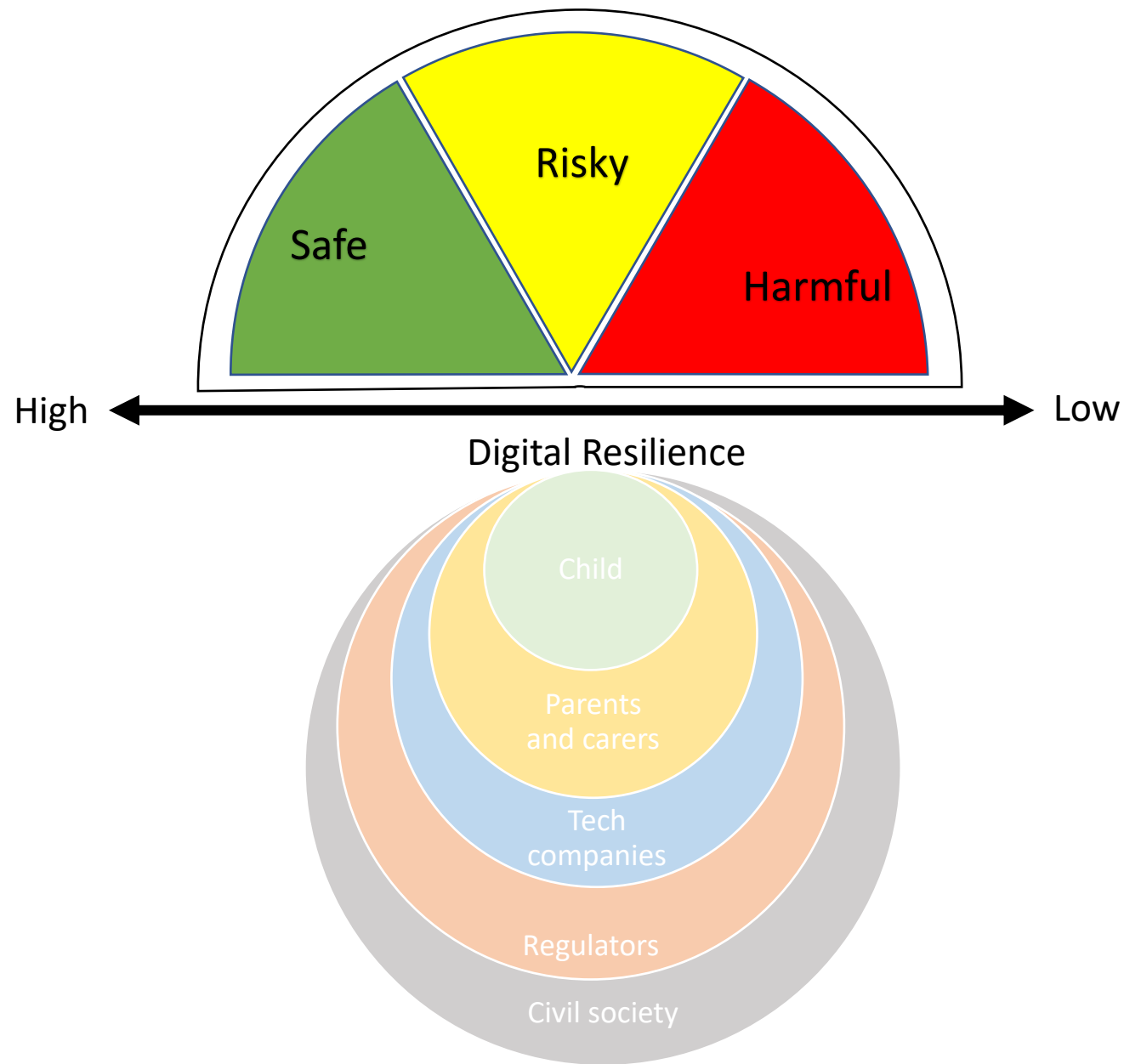
UKCIS Framework notes how digital resilience is developed?



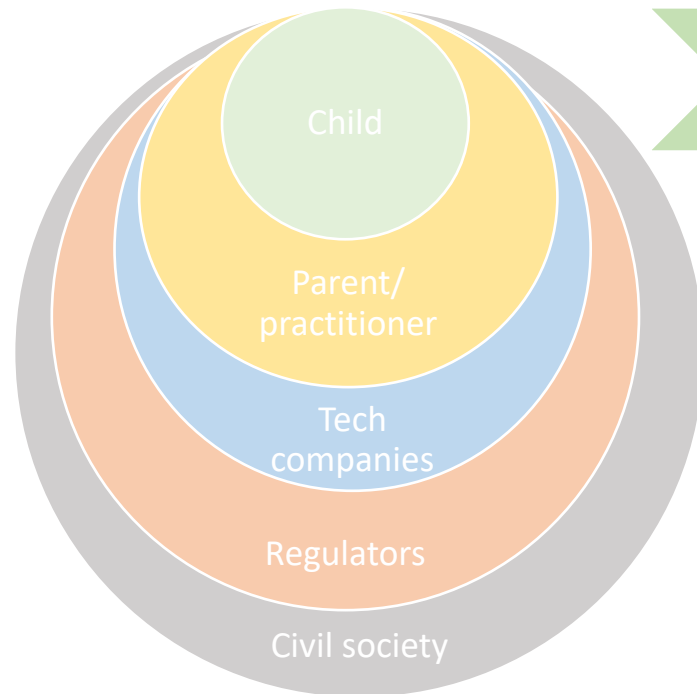
However, resilience is not an individual attribute. It is systemic.

(UKCIS 2020, p.5)

What it means
to build digital
resilience at
systems level?



Whose responsibility is it to protect anyway?



Responsibilisation through education/
awareness, risk averse mentality

Parent/practitioner blaming

Lack of regulation, accountability or
transparency

Lack codes of practice, enforcement
power and technical knowhow

Problematic attitudes and social norms
towards children, women and other
minoritized genders (Henry et al. 2020)

“They always say, ‘Don’t send pictures because they might get spread’, but the only problem with that is they never say to people ‘Don’t spread them.’”

(Beckett and Warrington 2019, p.7)

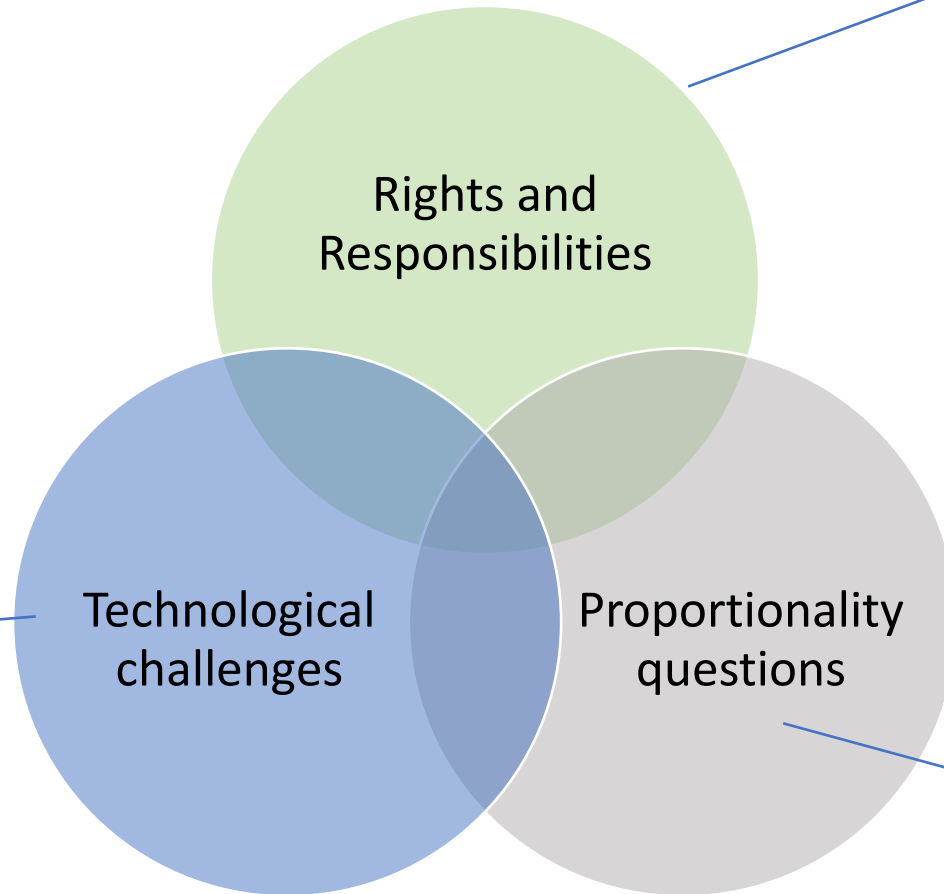


Online Safety Bill 2022

- A systemic approach to regulation of the internet (Wood, 2021)
- A statutory duty of care on technology companies to ensure the safety of their users enforced by an independent regulator.
- Duty to take reasonable and proportionate action to tackle online harms on their services.
- Clear safety standards issued by the regulator with power to enforce the standards.

Online Safety Bill and the current socio-politico-economic context

- Need to develop 'safety by design'
- Age Appropriate Design Codes & best interests of children
- Photo DNA
- Pre-screening of content
- Moderation of live streaming by humans
- Screening of encrypted messages



- Protection from harm
- Prevention of radicalization
- Freedom from exploitation
- Freedom of speech
- Right to privacy
- Unfair advantage

- Assault on democracy
- Due diligence needed, not content control
- Regulation v surveillance
- Anti-digital and technological developments
- Risk of driving investment out

Safeguarding from OCSEA

- A third of children told no one
- Disclosure recipients needs to be knowledgeable
- Shame, fear of blame, stigma act as barriers
- No perception of abuse
- Peer support play vital role

“

[I told] no one, that was my own little skeleton I put it back into the closet until I was ready to deal with it one day.

Girl Survivor Namibia

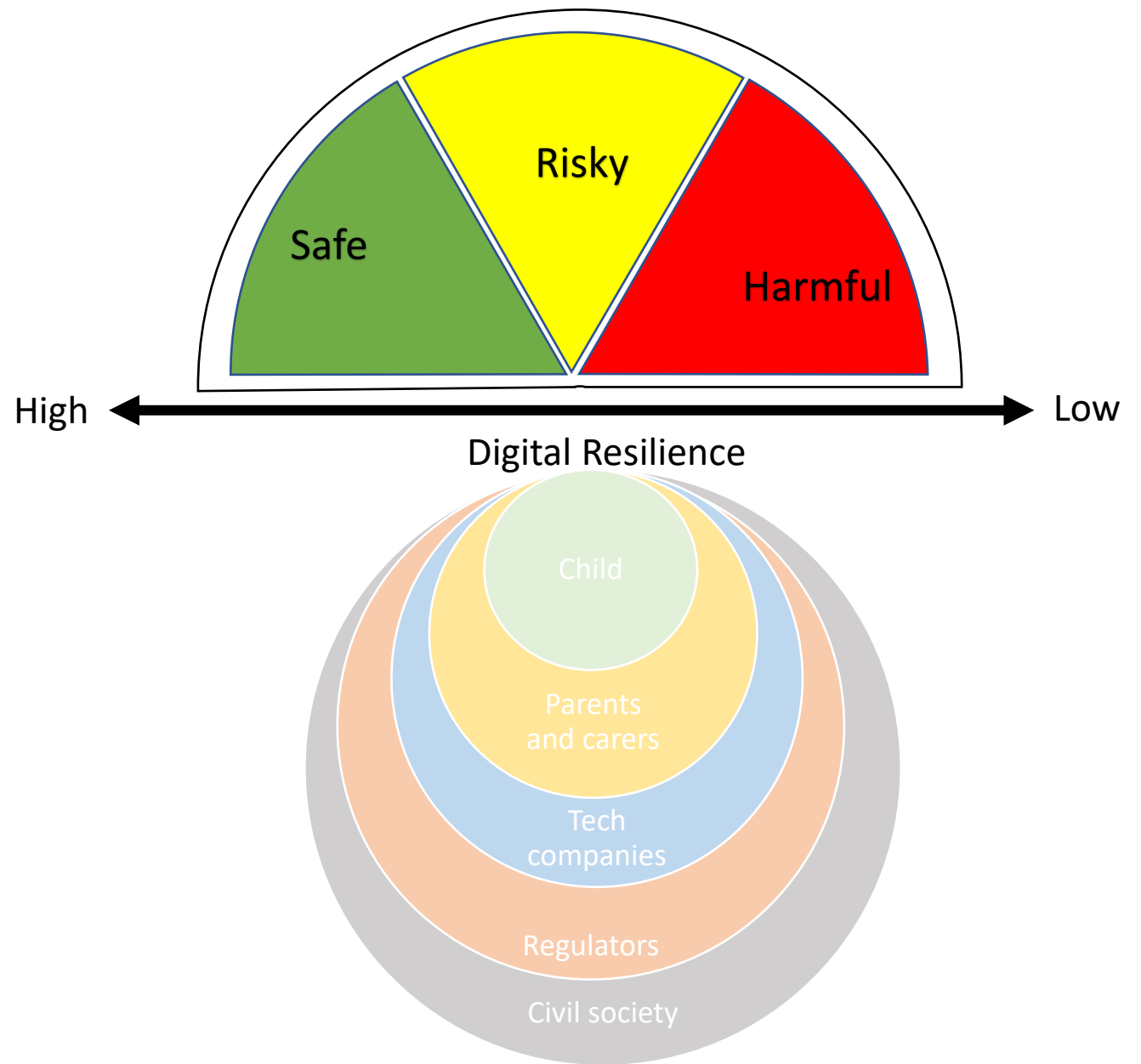
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(ECPAT International, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti 2022, p. 3)

Lessons to be learnt for child protection practice

- Frontline workers, law enforcement and justice professionals often lack capacity, knowledge and resources to provide comprehensive and child-centered support to children subjected to OCSEA (UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti 2022).
- There is an unhelpful hierarchy of harm that minimises abuse and harm i.e., online abuse is perceived as less impacting and non-urgent (Hamilton-Gilchristis et al., 2017; 2021)
- Under- appreciation of technology's potential role in abuse (Hamilton-Gilchristis et a., 2017)
- Assessment approaches and tools needs to be tailored to do risk and impact assessments of children (Willoughby 2019)
- Child protection systems need to acknowledge the potential for secondary trauma (Martin 2016) particularly for investigating officers.

What it means
to build digital
resilience at
systems level?



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