UK Home Office rolling out new technology to detect Child Sexual Abuse on suspect's devices

The Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) has launched the world's first national roll-out of Cyacomb Forensics mobile device capability, enabling UK police forces to scan devices for known child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in seconds.

"The Home Office is committed to equipping law enforcement with the latest technology to tackle the ever-growing threat of online child sexual abuse. Tools such as Fast Forensic Triage are crucial to empower law enforcement to identify child sexual abuse material within seconds, supporting digital forensics investigations and safeguarding more children more quickly."

Home Office

CAID is a key part of the national IT solution to fight against Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, a priority UK national threat. The Home Office developed CAID in collaboration with the police, industry partners and British and international technology companies. The project was rolled out across all UK territorial police forces and the National Crime Agency in December 2014, and the Home Office hasn't stopped investing in its development since.

The upgrade of CAID capabilities with Cyacomb's fast digital triage technology was first announced by the then Home Secretary in 2019, with the UK the first country to adopt nationally. The recent renewal in August 2024 sees the contract extended for a further two years. The scope of project has also been expanded to include Cyacomb's mobile device capability to ensure that UK policing remains at the forefront of the fight against Child Sexual Abuse Material.

 According to the NCA (National Crime Agency), it is estimated that there are between 710,000 and 840,000 UK-based adult offenders who pose varying degrees of risk to children, equivalent to 1.3% to 1.6% of the UK adult population

The levels of offending are devastating and continue to increase, and scaling solutions to safeguard children has never been more important.

Cyacomb Examiner, instantly at hand for the police officer, works like a "digital breathalyser". It is simple to use and scans a suspect's device for known child abuse in seconds, 100 times faster than other tools. This digital forensics triage enables officers to move investigations forward more quickly and efficiently, ensures prompt safeguarding action for children, and can reduce the workload downstream in the digital forensics labs.

When deployed in the UK, Cyacomb Examiner is powered by data from the CAID in the form of a secure-by-design Contraband Filter, which means the technology can be used by investigating officers and search teams rather than having to remain under lock and key in the lab.

"We're extremely proud that by leveraging the power, speed, and security of Cyacomb's groundbreaking Contraband Filter technology and the central CAID Database, the partnership between Cyacomb and CAID has provided UK Policing with the ability to rapidly triage devices, identify offenders, and protect potential victims of child sexual exploitation earlier in an investigation than ever before."

Cyacomb Head of Customer Success, Alan McConnell