

Cyber spotlight virtual reality

The cyber spotlight virtual reality (VR) programme is aimed to enhance understanding of cybercrime prevention through a series of learning environments.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Community engagement Cybercrime Digital, data and analytics
Organisation	Yorkshire and Humber Regional Organised Crime Unit
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Region	North East
Partners	Police Education Private sector
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	October 2024

Key details

Scale of initiative	National
Target group	Adults Children and young people

Aim

The aim of cyber spotlight is to:

- provide an educational tool to encourage young people to be aware of cybercrime
- provide safeguards mechanisms for young people online
- promote positive online behaviours

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of cyber spotlight are to:

- increase awareness and understanding of cybercrime, and particularly the Computer Misuse Act 1990
- increase identification of young people who may be engaged in cyber criminality
- increase referrals into the cyber choices (prevent) programme
- reduce the number of young people engaging in cybercrime
- reduce victims of cybercrime

Description

Yorkshire and Humber Regional Cyber Crime Unit (YHROCU) recognised that for several years there had been little innovation in the delivery of cybercrime prevention and protection education. This indicated that there was a lack of community engagement and knowledge around types of cybercrimes. To tackle this issue, the ROCU team conducted research into new, creative ways to deliver these messages, and to reach a wide range of communities.

Development of cyber spotlight

During this research, it was highlighted that parents, carers and other safeguarding professionals were being provided with cyber security leaflets, which was not an effective engagement tool. This prompted the idea of a virtual reality (VR) programme, in which this audience would participate in a “spot the signs” game. The main purpose of the VR programme is to increase engagement, awareness of the Computer Misuse Act 1990 and refer young people to services when they require help.

YHROCU then collaborated with Sheffield Hallam University’s CENTRIC team to develop the VR programme. Cyber spotlight was then produced by computer programmers and police cyber specialists. The first module is available on VR via Meta Quest and on desktop. The development of Module 1 for cyber spotlight was funded by the Home Office.

Cyber spotlight module 1 – child’s bedroom

Module 1 has now been rolled out nationwide and focuses upon prevention of cyber criminality. It consists of a virtual environment simulating a young person’s bedroom, with objects placed around the room. These are designed to encourage the user to click and interact with the objects to “spot the signs” of potential cybercrime. All the interactive assets are cyber security and crime risks that children could be interacting with but are unaware of the dangers. The outcome of module 1 is to increase young peoples’ safeguarding knowledge.

Cyber spotlight has been used in schools, colleges, events for dedicated safeguard leads but also in conjunction with [cyber blue line](#). The force provides the Meta Quest headsets and gives a demonstration on how to use it. Participants are then allowed to freely explore the virtual environment and learn as they go. There is also an option to complete module 1 on a desktop, where an access code is given, and the product can be gained and delivered without the presence of the ROCU team.

Cyber spotlight module 2 – business environment

Module 2 for cyber spotlight is now in development and focuses on protection from cyber criminality. Module 2 is targeted for businesses and corporations to learn how to deal with cyber threats in a more engaging manner.

The programme simulates an office building environment and covers topics such as phishing emails, physical attacks and compromised emails. Development of module 2 is being undertaken

by the CENTRIC team at Sheffield Hallam University and is funded by the City of London Police. The current cost of development is £55,000.

Evaluation

An evaluation is being planned and will be led by YHROCU and Sheffield Hallam University.

The evaluation will consist of four methods:

1. User satisfaction survey - these surveys are distributed after each cyber spotlight session, however if this is not logistically possible, they can be emailed to the main point of contact for the event to be completed later.
2. Knowledge checks pre and post-completion - Kahoot quizzes are used as pre and post-knowledge checks. Merchandise incentives such as cups and pens are distributed to encourage audiences to participate and engage with the content.
3. Control or focus group feedback - monthly meetings are held with the ROCU team and Sheffield Hallam University's CENTRIC team to discuss feedback surrounding cyber spotlight.
4. Practitioner satisfaction survey - safeguard leads who use cyber spotlight for training safeguarding professionals are given a satisfaction survey to determine how easy it can be delivered to larger groups.

Overall impact

Due to the cyber spotlight being recently implemented there is limited information regarding its overall impact.

Initially, the observation of practitioners has been very positive, with increased engagement around cybercrime prevention.

Learning

- Measuring the uptake and usage of the VR version of the product, when compared to the desktop option will be useful to understand how much this technology is being utilised to educate others

about cyber security and crime prevention.

- There are several barriers to using VR technology, such as acquiring the correct amount of headsets and controllers for events, which may become cost-prohibitive.
- The time taken to develop cyber spotlight modules has been slow-paced due to the complexity and amount of content involved.

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