

PRINCIPLES

for a sustainable working
environment in ReportIt,
Save the Children



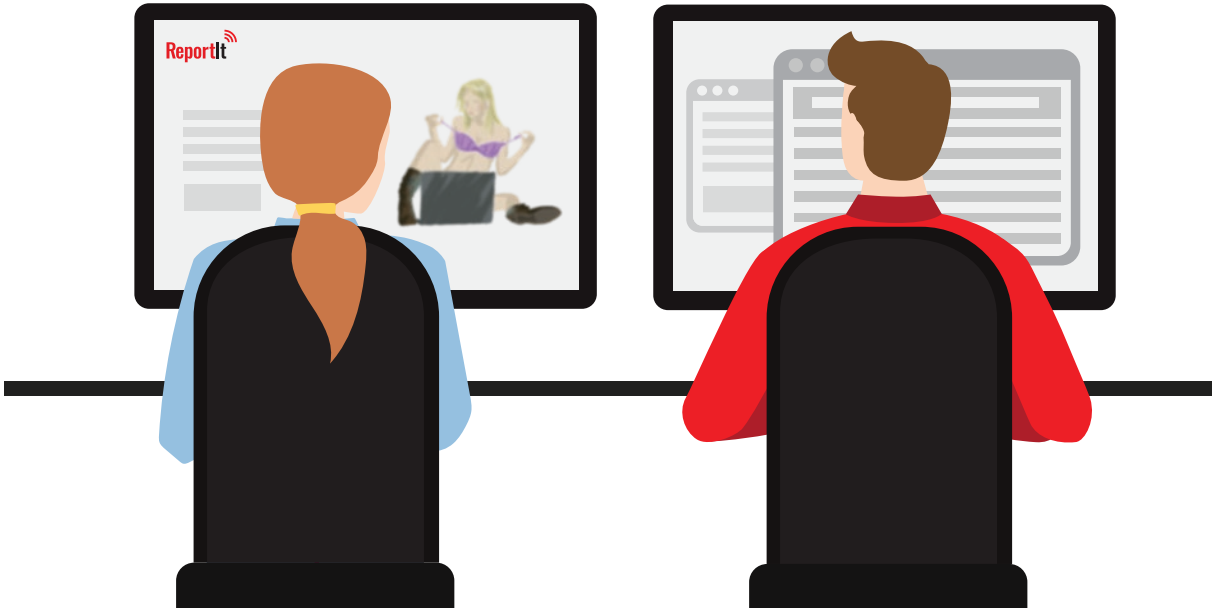
Save the Children

ReportIt 

The logo for ReportIt, with the word "ReportIt" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The "It" is in a darker shade. To the right of the text is a white icon consisting of three curved lines, resembling a signal or Wi-Fi symbol.

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About *ReportIt* and our analysis work

In 2001, Save the Children established the *ReportIt* hotline, where people can anonymously report Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) that they have seen on the Internet. The hotline employees analyse these reports and ensure that the material is forwarded to the Danish police, hotlines in other countries or Interpol to ensure that the illegal material is removed and that the abuse material can be investigated. The hotline is part of a larger network in which hotlines around the world work closely together with national authorities, Europol and Interpol to remove CSAM from the internet. The analysts carry out psychologically work, processing and analysing all of the reports, which typically consist of pictures or videos of what the reviewers think is illegal abuse material. When an analyst opens a report, they do not know anything beforehand about the material. Although not all of the reviews are assessed as sexual abuse material according to Danish law, they may still contain disturbing images or video depicting children who are being exploited. The hotline also receives many reports of materials featuring adults in sexually explicit situations as well as fetishes with animals, blood and the like, which can be extremely disturbing to be exposed to. In other words, the *ReportIt* analysts are carrying out psychologically stressful work when processing these reports.

Preface

Witnessing other people's perversions, ignorance and evil. In a few words, this describes having to analyse images and videos depicting the sexual abuse of children and images of children who have been forced or enticed by adults to pose in sexual positions.

Working as an analyst on a hotline like **ReportIt** involves a mental emotional journey down into dark spaces, where people with a lack of empathy and mentalising ability live out their desires at the expense of children, whose faces and bodies are lit up on the screen. It is disgusting. It makes one nauseous, and one become disillusioned with humanity.

But what do you then do when confronting it is part of your job?

Analysing abuse material featuring children is necessary and important work. It is indispensable in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children. Around the world, people are working in police and civilian hotlines, such as **ReportIt**, analysing and assessing this kind of material in order to protect children.

But we must recognise that this is a stressful job that requires thorough training, supervision, a clear framework, and good working conditions for the employees who must carry out the work. We must ensure this – both for the sake of the personnel as well as for the children we must help.

As a manager, I am therefore quite proud of the strong focus on the working environment that pervades the Save the Children **ReportIt** hotline. This focus enables us to recruit and retain skilled analysts who – in addition to their work operating the hotline – now also teach colleagues from the rest of the world about how to develop a sustainable working environment for such hotlines.

Pernille Spitz

Head of protection from abuse at Save the Children

REPORTIT

Principles for a sustainable working environment in *ReportIt*, Save the Children

At Save the Children, we carefully consider how we arrange and ensure a sustainable working environment for our *ReportIt* personnel. With this handbook, we set a direction for what a sustainable hotline working environment looks and feels like and how we can continue to develop in a sustainable direction.

The analysis work places high emotional demands on the personnel

When witnessing violent and potentially trauma-inducing events, the circumstances surrounding the individual event have bearing on how it affects those who experience it. Your proximity to the incident is of great importance. A distinction is made between *primary traumatisation*, where you have been directly exposed to a violent incident by having seen it happen yourself and *secondary traumatisation*, where you have been indirectly exposed, for example by having to work professionally with the consequences after violent or disturbing incidents (Høgsted, 2021).

According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), research has found a correlation: the more disturbing an incident is, the greater the impact on those who have experienced it. If there is no plan in place that sufficiently protects employees who are in a function where they are acutely or regularly exposed to potentially traumainducing events, they can be overwhelmed and become psychologically unbalanced. And if such a negative development goes undetected and untreated, the employee can develop psychological stress conditions, such as burnout, stress and milder forms of depression or anxiety. In the extreme, this can contribute to the employee being traumatised and/or developing psychological disorders, such as PTSD.

The analytical work carried out as part of the hotline regularly and directly exposes our employees to disturbing incidents through image and video material featuring the sexual abuse of children and other forms of disturbing material depicting violence, the exploitation of people and animals, fetishes, and explicit, sexual images. Such material can 'leave a mark', and exposure to it can be psychologically taxing. A sustainable hotline working environment is therefore very much about preventing traumatisation and ensuring the presence of protective factors in the workplace, meaning that the employees are still able to thrive despite having to deal with the intense emotional demands that the analysis work places on them.

Our perspective

We have chosen to use stress psychology and *psychotraumatology* as the overall theoretical and research framework for our work, especially as presented by the Danish *Institut for Belastningspsykologi* (Institute for Stress Psychology) and psychologist Rikke Høgsted, who has written, among other things, the *Grundbog i Belastningspsykologi* (Handbook in Stress Psychology, 2021). Stress psychology is about situations that stress people and how we react to having been exposed to stress. Psychotraumatology is about prevention, treatment and research investigating situations that traumatise people and the human reactions that are linked to having experienced a traumatic event.

From this perspective, we have been inspired to pursue a holistic approach to the working environment, where responsibility is not only placed with the workplace, the manager, and/or the individual employee, but where all employees in all functions play a role in relation to taking joint responsibility to ensure a good working environment. Rikke Høgsted

describes such an approach based on four different levels in an organisation – *the organisation, management, personnel group and the individual employee* – and where employees at each of the four levels must cooperate in taking responsibility for the shared working environment. Depending on the level at which you work, the framework for your own and other people’s work you have influence on is different – and how you can take responsibility for the working environment by playing your role is therefore also different.

Such an approach requires that all employees have a basic understanding of the risk of traumatisation and how to deal with it. It is largely an organisational and managerial responsibility to ensure that the employees carrying out psychologically stressful work have an understanding of what constitutes mental stress, how they react when affected, and what they can do to deal with it in the organisation. In this way, it is possible to ensure a common starting point for when and how they can take responsibility, both from a preventive perspective and if a crisis must be handled.

Principles for **our approach to the working environment**

Based on knowledge and experience from practice, we have drawn up a number of principles for how we ensure a working environment in and around our hotline that prevents 'psychological overload' and traumatisation and promotes well-being and reassurance among our employees.

The principle of a sustainable working environment

We would like to ensure that we have a working environment that enables employees to function as analysts for as long as they want to be in that function. That it is not a job that simply exhausts the employees' resources until they one day just can't take it anymore. According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), a sustainable working environment is about achieving a healthy balance between utilising employees' resources to solve mentally and emotionally taxing work and correspondingly protecting employees' resources so that they can recover and develop resilience against the stressors they must be able to handle. 'Resources' must be understood broadly; for example, in relation to finances, time, professional and human skills, and mental capacity, which especially the analysis work demands of the employees and the organisation. There must be a balance between how resource-demanding and mentally taxing a job is versus the preventive and protective measures that are present. Based on this way of thinking, we can in practice analyse the work we do with a view to assessing how it can be done in a sound working environment. And we can evaluate whether the measures we have introduced have a positive effect on our working environment.

The principle that our working environment is a shared responsibility

Establishing a sustainable working environment means that everyone across the four levels must take responsibility and support our shared principles. This implies that we act and make decisions about the organisation and execution of the work we do based on an awareness of how it can place the individual employee in a more or less vulnerable situation. This applies in the daily operation of the hotline, in development work and other activities, and in the planning and execution of new projects involving the hotline employees. It is important that protective measures (e.g., supervision and debriefing interviews), be carried out regularly; that they do not only apply as conditions in periods when it is convenient whereas in other periods they are neglected so as to allow employees to spend time working on something else. Or that a principle applies in one context but not in another one that is very comparable in terms of also involving psychologically stressful work. If this occurs, great insecurity can result among the employees and promote a feeling that you, as an employee, are very vulnerable, because the framework that must ensure a sustainable working environment is more fragile and unpredictable than expected.

The principle of knowing the risk

If we want to make sure that our efforts with developing a sustainable working environment are directed at the most relevant factors, we need to know what elements in the analysis work and in the handling of CSAM which can increase risk of traumatization. Rikke Høgsted presents research and experience from practice that illustrate various risk factors that have an impact on how disturbing incidents affect those who witness them. We can recognise many of Høgsted's risk factors from the analysis work in our hotline, which are about *duration, repetition, causes, victims, and strong sensory impressions*. In the analysis work, em-

employees are *regularly* exposed to disturbing incidents, which increases the risk that stress builds up unnoticed over time and reaches a critical saturation point that triggers flashbacks. The employees also witness many *repetitions* in the analysis work: multiple reports with identical content, the same children being included in different content, and different children being exposed to the same types of abuse. Repetition increases the risk of analysts experiencing a sense of powerlessness and helplessness, especially if they know that the victims involved are still suffering. There is also an increased risk of a strong impact associated with events that are *man-made* rather than natural. Other risk factors include if the number of victims of a disturbing incident is large and if the victims are children.

Moreover, the amount of sensory impressions from a disturbing event is also related to the risk of being affected to a lesser or greater degree.

Principles for **managing risk factors**

Once we know which elements in the work increase the psychological burden and risk of traumatisation, we can better draw up principles for our hotline operations. Our principles are intended to curb risk factors while at the same time ensuring the work process and measures that prevent and protect against traumatisation.

The principle of reducing exposure

In the analysis work, we make use of various guidelines, strategies and technical tools with a view to shielding the individual analyst from unnecessary exposure. We have a case management system – SCARt – that can be set to remember previous classifications of an

image or video, so that the analysts do not have to process the same material over and over. The system can also handle all analysis and data-recording work, meaning that we only have to analyse the content of a report once instead of multiple times for different purposes. In practice, the principle also means that we only examine the material for as long as is necessary to be able to assess whether it is CSAM. If we see that a child is involved in the first part of a video, we do not watch the entire video. We can also use a blur tool as needed so that image and video material becomes blurry when we do not need to deal with it.

The principle of taking a break

When on hotline duty, we are free to take breaks, and they are a priority. When taking a break, we leave the hotline room and go out to the coffee machine or outside in the fresh air, so it also becomes a physical break from sitting in front of the hotline computers.

The principle of reducing sensory impressions

When processing reports, we do what we can to reduce the sensory impact of disturbing content. For example, we view the videos without sound unless we suspect that Danish children or perpetrators are involved (and we must therefore be able to listen to the video). Our experience is that focusing exclusively on the details in the image or video that are necessary for the analysis can also have a protective effect. And at the same time, we try not to focus on details such as the surroundings and facial expressions that can trigger empathy and provide stronger insight into the suffering or life circumstances in which the people in the material are or have been trapped.

Principles for **the organisation's responsibility**

Save the Children runs the *ReportIt* service, and we are therefore responsible for upholding a number of special principles on an organisational level that contribute to securing the working environment for the *ReportIt* personnel.

It is important that the organisation that runs the hotline, regardless of its circumstances and resources, places discussions about the working environment and working conditions on the agenda. Everyone in the organisation is responsible to demonstrate an awareness of how the analysts perform psychologically taxing work. The organisation must therefore help to promote a culture in which managers, colleagues and employees all reflect on and discuss how to look after themselves and each other at work.

The principle of how the organisation is responsible for employee well-being and the working environment

Save the Children has the overall responsibility for the analysts' working environment. This is about creating a setting for the work that makes it possible to maintain a sustainable working environment. In that sense, the organisation has an overall responsibility for employee well-being together with the physical and psychological working environment.

According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), when an organisation operates a hotline service like *ReportIt*, there are factors that must be present to create a sustainable working environment:

Supervision

Permanent supervision for analysts is absolutely central to create a framework for a sustainable working environment. Supervision is intended to protect the analysts, and supervision generally allows the individual employee to examine and develop their strategies for dealing with the material emotionally. In practice, the employee themselves books the supervision, and the manager must follow up on whether the employee shows up and that it goes well.

As an organisation, however, Save the Children is responsible for ensuring that there is time to prioritise the individual employee's supervision. And the organisation must signal clearly to its personnel that supervision is important. **ReportIt** has a principle that individual supervision is basically unlimited for our analysts, but with a minimum supervision requirement of four times per year.

Social support

It is important that the organisation makes it possible for the analysts to receive social support through hotline-networks, colleagues and the manager. This support can come in different forms and be organised in different ways. On an organisational level, it is important that this is prioritised in the busy everyday work with many important tasks. Social support is important to reduce the sense of loneliness that the analysis work can cause for many.

The principle of how the organisation must provide the necessary physical framework

At Save the Children, we have a principle that an undisturbed office or room must be allocated to **ReportIt** – a room where you can close the door and which is exclusively designed according to **ReportIt's** needs. The organisation is aware that the service requires unique physical surroundings to operate while at the same time ensuring a healthy working environment for the analysis staff. Two computers are required, so that two employees can work next to each other, and the computers must be connected to a secured internet. The physical setting means a lot to how the analysis work is experienced. The hotline room must therefore be bright, and it must be possible to shield the computer screens out of consideration for others, who must not be exposed to abuse material.

The hotline room must be furnished with comfortable chairs for holding debriefing meetings, which also aids the sense of making a conscious transition from the analysis work to other tasks. The hotline furnishings must make the room pleasant to be in, and with a design that creates peace and promotes contemplation. We also have positive experience with having a speaker in the room so that we can listen to the radio or music while processing the reported materials.

The principle of having procedures and contingency plans for preventing and dealing with trauma

According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), the organisation must ensure that the employees and managers practicing preventive measures in their everyday work and that all employees are aware of the organisation's emergency plans should a crisis occur. The organisation's personnel policies and emergency plans should reflect a balance between the severity of what the organisation wants to prevent or handle and the initiatives that are intended to have a preventive effect or ensure that the crisis is dealt with professionally.

Save the Children has a number of personnel policies, guidelines and procedures that comprise the general principles for preventing and handling an incident concerning all employees (i.e., not only the *ReportIt* team).

The principle of how the hotline work is a special function in the organisation

Save the Children considers the performance of the *ReportIt* analysis work to be a special function. The analysts all receive a bonus for this specific work, which demonstrates the high level of respect that the organisation pays to the *ReportIt* work. *ReportIt* often receives recognition from the organisational level together with frequent mention in media coverage reporting on the work carried out by Save the Children. The analysis work enjoys a unique status in the organisation and is perceived as highly valued. The organisation also places strong emphasis on continuing education for the hotline employees, so we are able to dedicate resources to upskilling and travel activities, which demonstrates how Save the Children considers the analysis work a special task that must be taken care of to create a sustainable working environment and a high level of professionalism.



Principles for **the manager's responsibility**

The manager is generally responsible to ensure the well-being and job satisfaction of their employees, and the manager of the **ReportIt** analysis team has a special responsibility regarding the working environment.

The principle of the proper recruitment of new analysts

A manager's responsibility to ensure a good working environment for their employees already starts with their recruitment. Based on knowledge of the risks and protective factors, the manager must consider the skills required to do analysis and development work in a hotline. It is a job that places high demands on the individual employee, both professionally and personally, and it is important that they possess the skillset and characteristics to meet such demands. If not, there is a considerable risk of the employee quickly being overwhelmed by the work, which can have major consequences for them (Høgsted, 2021). At **ReportIt**, we are concerned with finding good techniques in the employment interview to cast light on how new employees will handle the strain of analysing abuse material. This can be challenging, as the job interview typically becomes rather theoretical, and it is difficult to test in practice, as presenting abuse material in a job interview would be illegal.

When recruiting new **ReportIt** analysis personnel, our manager also investigates how the work can impact the prospective employee's private life. Do they have close relationships and leisure interests that would serve as strengths in relation to having other things in their lives that are important and support them when dealing with heavy strains? Does the employee have any personal circumstances that constitute a vulnerability in relation

to carrying out the analysis work? Such as early trauma or experiences with sexual abuse? These are all points of attention that the manager has in mind when recruiting new members of the **ReportIt** analysis team.



The principle of in-house training

The manager is responsible for ensuring a good training process for new analysis personnel. Regardless of the professional background and/or personal experiences that a new employee brings with them, exposure to abuse material and explicit pornographic material in a professional context will often be new to the individual. The manager is therefore always working to ensure that training is organised optimally and that employees are not ‘thrown into the deep end’ before having learned how to swim. For ReportIt, this means a focus on gradual progression in the seriousness of the material to which new analysts are exposed and that they have completed our entire in-house training programme before they participate in Interpol training. This is because the Interpol training is primarily about recognising baseline material, and we want to ensure that our new analysts are prepared to be confronted with baseline material before having to deal with it at Interpol. The manager also evaluates our training programme together with the new analyst to give us an idea of what worked well and whether there is anything we should do differently next time.

The principle of strategic and sustainable planning of work

The **ReportIt** manager has the overall responsibility for ensuring strategic planning and a connection between the work to be done and the employees' skillset. The **ReportIt** project manager and personnel often work closely together on this. Several of the **ReportIt** team members are also involved in other projects and tasks outside of the **ReportIt** analysis work, which means that the team members can be required to work intensely with other tasks for a period.. Here, the manager is responsible for ensuring that a team member does not have to deal with heavy burdens in multiple projects at the same time, and to be aware of how increased intensity in the employee's other tasks can affect their well-being and resilience in their hotline analysis work. The manager must also use their knowledge of their employees – for example, in relation to individual strengths, vulnerabilities and professional motivation – to create a strategic and sustainable distribution of tasks. According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), it is important that the manager focuses on creating variety in their employees' work – in the course of the work day, the work week and the work year – to ensure that the employees are not worn out by solving the same, specific, and burdensome work, such as analysis work. The **ReportIt** analysis team is also constantly aware of when we each experience a sense of meaning in our work. Here, a shared challenge is how the analysis work itself is rarely experienced as meaningful, because we receive very little feedback on our efforts and our opportunities to act are limited compared to the extensive struggle to combat sexual abuse material involving children on the Internet. It is important that the manager also strives to ensure that the employees experience a strong sense of meaning through strategic planning and how the work is shared.

The principle of working groups rather than individual task-solving

The *ReportIt* manager is aware of ensuring that work is planned and shared in a manner that burdens the employees as little as possible. In practice, this means that we strive to attend to the work together in working groups rather than each individual analyst sitting alone with various tasks. According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), being part of a well-functioning working group can be one of the most protective measures in relation to handling psychologically demanding work. We also take pride in being an interdisciplinary team of *ReportIt* analysts, and we strive to take advantage of the opportunity for interdisciplinary sparring in relation to our work, as the individual tasks are often complex and require different professional skills.

The principle of deliberate planning of the analysis work

The manager must help to ensure that the most difficult work is attended to under the best possible conditions so that the analysts experience the least possible strain. According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), it is important that the most difficult work is done when employees are 'on top', because we are more vulnerable to disturbing impressions if, for example, we are tired, overwhelmed or for other reasons have difficulty attending to work on the basis of a professional and analytical approach.

ReportIt uses this principle when scheduling our analysis work. We make sure that the same analyst is not scheduled to have shifts several weeks in a row – they must get a break from analysis work and be able to spend time doing other professional work.

We also ensure that the hotline analysts are on duty early in their shift or day of work, so that it is not the last thing they do before going home and having to adjust to their private affairs and activities. We are very aware of how it takes time for employees to shift from private person to professional and back again – and that we must arrange the analysis work in a manner where employees are not forced to make abrupt changes, because this leaves employees extra vulnerable to deal with their exposure to disturbing incidents in the analysis work in a professional manner. Analysts therefore never report to the hotline first thing after a vacation, for example, as doing so would require such a profound mental adjustment. And we regularly discuss the structures for planning shifts and whether anything can be optimised.

The principle of following up on employee well-being

The manager's responsibility to ensure a good working environment for their employees never ends. It is therefore important that the management overseeing the analysis team systematically follows up on employee well-being. In Save the Children, our employees all have monthly one-on-one interviews with their immediate manager, which the employees themselves must book with their manager. These interviews provide a good opportunity for the managers responsible for the ReportIt team to follow up on their well-being on an ongoing basis specifically in relation to their ReportIt work. It can be difficult for employees to say something out loud about how things are going – and not least to ask for help when needed. The manager can accommodate the employee by being the one to take the initiative and ask about the **ReportIt** team member's well-being.





Principles for **group responsibility**

As colleagues, we have a great impact on each other's well-being, and part of the responsibility for a sustainable working environment is therefore rightly placed at this level. Because we have so much influence on each other, we can also do a lot to support each other. According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), being part of a well-functioning group is one of the most preventive factors in relation to dealing with psychological strain. It is therefore important that we continuously focus on how we as a group are thriving. We are therefore also continuously evaluating how our principles work in practice at the group level. We are aware of how the group is changeable; things can happen that change our needs, and the group can change. Are there new analysts? Or will the group dynamics change when one of the team members stops? And can new analysts and the new group have different needs?

The principle of always sitting and analysing together with a colleague

We have a principle that an analyst must never sit alone and do analysis work, because the social support during a hotline shift is crucial to ensure a sustainable working environment. By sitting next to a colleague when analysing, there is less a sense of being alone with the material. Our shifts are therefore organised in such a way that we always sit together two-by-two, each working on our own computer. A **ReportIt** analyst must never sit alone and process reports. If the colleague you are supposed to work together with falls ill or is otherwise prevented from doing the analysis work, a third colleague is found or the hotline is closed for the day.

The principle of always working together with a colleague makes several of the forms of social support more accessible. And working together with a colleague makes the analysis work itself easier. We make a point of enjoying the work in a way that is not done with other work, so that sitting and analysing is pleasant. An essential part of the principle of always analysing together with a colleague is that we actively rely on each other for sparring and support. By sitting next to each other – instead of facing each other – it is easier to ask one another for help, such as assessing the age of a child. The responsibility and professional assessment are shared and, in addition, you develop in-depth insight into what kind of material you are each examining, which reduces the sense of being alone with the work. You might see something that you find particularly difficult – where it helps to say something out loud and be heard.

The principle of being part of a team that supports each other

Being part of a well-functioning team is a strong, protective factor. We know that there are many opportunities to give each other important social support as a team, and we therefore have a principle that as a **ReportIt** analyst, you must be part of a team with other analysts who are all supporting each other. The members of a team can support each other socially in different ways. Rikke Høgsted (2021) mentions emotional support, professional support and practical support.

Emotional support:

Emotional support is important to reduce the feeling of being alone with the work, which many analysts can find overwhelming. Analysts working as a team can provide emotional support to one another that no one else can give, because no one else really understands

the special nature of this work (Høgsted, 2021). In this way, your experience with analysing material can be mirrored. It is very valuable, and a group of analysts can create very close ties with one another. At the same time, it is important to avoid isolation from other colleagues or relatives who do not have the same knowledge of the analysis work. Although they cannot mirror your experience by analysing material, they can provide other important forms of support. At **ReportIt**, we have organised our shifts in such a way that, as far as possible, everyone has the same number of hotline shifts with the other members of the team. In so doing, everyone has the opportunity to provide support to everyone else, and we try to strengthen the team spirit across the board and avoid 'partner couples' isolating themselves from the rest of the team.

To receive support and in turn to give support to colleagues, it is important that the team members all share experiences with each other. At **ReportIt**, we try to create a space and culture while doing analysis work in which we use each other actively in relation to sparring and that we share our experiences with each other along the way. Team members sharing difficult things together can strengthen the relationships between them and produce a lot of positives (Høgsted, 2021). One thing to be aware of is our limits in relation to not 'overdosing' each other with difficult, personal emotions. We try to talk openly with each other in the team about how to handle this in the team in the best possible way for everyone.

We do a lot of laughing together as a team. We know that humour – and especially dark humour – can be an effective coping strategy for a group working with the analysis of abuse material. Laughing together can strengthen relationships and create distance from unpleasant experiences. However, it is important that this is not the only team strategy for dealing with difficult experiences. And it is important to remember how difficult it can be

for those outside the team to understand what you are reacting to, because they lack the insight into the work.

It is important that the entire team shows openness and respect for the measures taken in relation to the working environment, so that it becomes easier for all of the team members to make use of the measures without feeling wrong. When everyone – regardless of whether you feel a need to talk through something, as in group supervision – supports the necessity of carrying out the supervision, it becomes easier for someone to speak up about struggling with something despite possibly having doubts about whether it is important enough to discuss.

Professional support:

Professional discussions within the team are extremely important, and they are used as a kind of professional compass when carrying out psychologically demanding work that can create emotional turmoil that can be difficult to navigate and ultimately impact one's professional assessment (Høgsted, 2021). In ReportIt, we draw on one another extensively for concrete assessments about material when sitting together in pairs. This provides a sense of security in relation to assessing whether something is illegal and thus contributes to, among other things, raising the quality of professional assessments and supporting each other in decisions. Professional support can be provided in many different ways, such as everyone being able to bring up topics for discussion at hotline meetings.

Practical support:

Another effective way whereby team members can support each other is by providing practical support to one another. Practical support can mean a lot to a colleague who may

be enduring a period with an extra heavy workload or a strained private life (Høgsted, 2021). Practical support is about relieving each other, and it requires a culture and space in which everyone feels safe and is able to either ask for help with something or ask if others need help. At **ReportIt**, we have a principle of helping each other and we promote a culture where we are generally very aware of each other. One way of providing practical support to one another is by swapping shifts when things do not fit together for whatever reason. Here, there is the feeling that everyone wants to help and support.

The principle of always debriefing together after doing analysis work

Towards the end of a hotline shift, we have a debriefing session (2 × 15 minutes) to ensure emotional support. This debriefing is a compulsory element in each and every hotline shift. The two individuals who have been on duty together debrief together. We spend half an hour on the debriefing, where first one person is interviewed according to our debriefing model and then the other. The purpose of this systematic structure is to ensure that the analysis personnel all receive the same opportunity to give and receive support, which is not something that is to be taken for granted from merely being in the same room.

We debrief according to a model that our analysis personnel have all helped to develop in collaboration with our supervisor. The model contains a short series of questions relating to the experiences of the analysis team and their work: What has been difficult?

What is pre-occupying them? And does something have to be done about something? It can be difficult to ask the questions that ensure social support if you do not have to do so. By having these standard questions on paper, it is no one person's responsibility to ask anyone else about how it has been. And, conversely, nobody is responsible for saying out loud if they have something that they need to talk through.

Debriefing questions:

- 1. How was your experience analysing today's material? Please elaborate and explain why. What did you find most difficult about today's work? Was it related to the material or something else?*
- 2. Why was this more difficult compared to other aspects? What are your thoughts on this? What emotions are you feeling? How do you react to this experience?*
- 3. What's going through your mind right now?*
- 4. How can we build on this conversation? Working together, can we identify some next steps?*

The principle of group supervision

ReportIt conducts compulsory group supervision once every three months. We believe that group supervision is necessary to ensure that colleagues support one another socially. Being in a supervision room together provides a special opportunity to witness each other's experiences. The group supervision requires that the analysis personnel all participate actively and share from their own work experience. It is organised in such a manner that the group supervisor is also the individual supervisor for all of the group members. We very deliberately evaluate the supervision on an ongoing basis to ensure that the group members are all getting something out of the group supervision. For the group supervision, we agree on which topic to discuss each time. Such topics have included how to talk to friends, partners, family and acquaintances about our work on the hotline. We have also talked about how each of us can be hit by a sense of meaninglessness when analysing reported material. Moreover, this space is a suitable setting if a conflict arises within the team, because there is a facilitator. Our experience with group supervision is that it greatly reduces a feeling of being alone in difficult situations, and it strengthens the sense of being 'right together in all the wrong'. It strengthens the relationships between the hotline colleagues and, in particular, the sense of being part of a team. We also use the group supervision room to develop the initiatives that relate to our working environment.

Principles for **the individual employee's responsibility**

The individual employee is also responsible for looking after themselves and to contribute to ensuring that the common principles for the working environment are applied in practice. This individual responsibility is first and foremost about being in touch with yourself and expressing how you feel in the role of analyst, both to your colleagues and your manager. Being in touch with yourself is about trying to take note of your thoughts, feelings, behaviour and bodily sensations – and how they affect each other. Each of us only knows how we feel and what we need. It can be difficult to notice yourself, as you can have blind spots or experience periods where you feel pressured or overwhelmed and unable to direct attention to or act on your own needs (Høgsted, 2021). Having to talk with others at work about your feelings can also be overwhelming. But doing so is important so that others around you can help to take responsibility for ensuring that you are not being overwhelmed or you are at serious risk of traumatising.

The principle of how psychological stressors must be handled at work, where the stress occurs

Although each employee bears an individual responsibility for themselves and the shared working environment, this does not imply a strong focus on how an employee's lifestyle, personal experiences or characteristics can render them more or less resilient at work. The individual employee can find themselves in a very vulnerable situation if a good working environment comes to depend greatly on private circumstances, such as habits for diet and exercise and the presence of close relationships, as every employee arranges their own private life differently, meaning that the members of the analysis team all have dif-

ferent resources that they can draw on. The risk of this not succeeding is great, which can strengthen feelings of defeat, inadequacy and loneliness

It is therefore essential for us to spread a principle of how the psychological strain that can result from the work – especially analysis work – must be prevented and dealt with in the working environment framework in which the work is carried out. After that, it must be up to the individual employee's own interest and need to possibly explore how they can also make use of resources in their spare time and in their private life to strengthen their well-being in their work.



The principle of how we are all different people with different individual vulnerabilities

It varies from employee to employee how personal circumstances can impact whether they find themselves in a more or less vulnerable position in their role as analyst. Rikke Høgsted has investigated the characteristics of the individual employee that can increase the vulnerability to being psychologically affected by exposure to disturbing incidents. The risk factors concern the employee's *current life situation, career phase, personal history of trauma and identification with victims*. Current life situation is about how our vulnerability and strength to handle exposure to disturbing incidents is affected by our general well-being. Increased vulnerability can result from an employee being in the *first stages of their career*, because younger people may have less confidence in their own abilities and more often find themselves in situations where they are unsure of what to do; and conversely, also when in the *last stages of working life*, because you may possibly have been exposed to many disturbing incidents over the course of a long career, and the psychological strain has accumulated over time. Increased vulnerability can also result from employees having experienced trauma in their childhood or if they must deal with disturbing material as part of the hotline work that features persons or events that wake a kind of recognition and that they therefore *identify* with.

The principle of using strategies in one's work – and keeping an eye on how they work

As an analyst, it is important to be aware of the general risk of psychological strain associated with being exposed to disturbing incidents in the hotline work, and it is important to be aware of the personal circumstances that can potentially increase your vulnerability in relation to handling the hotline work. If you are aware of this, you can better explore

which strategies you can use to help you deal with the intense emotional demands that analysis work places on you. There are many different strategies that you can try to use; here, it is important to find out which ones work well for you and which ones do not have the desired effect. Over time, what it is that you need to pay special attention to and increase your protection against can also change. This makes it important to notice whether the stress at work begins to affect you in an inappropriate way and to a degree where the strategies do not work, and other actions therefore become necessary. According to Rikke Høgsted (2021), it can be good to remember how your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and behaviour influence each other, and that you can therefore advantageously use different strategies aimed at the four links. Concretely, strategies for dealing with thoughts can, for example, be about reminding yourself that you are not alone in witnessing sexual abuse against children, but that you are part of a larger professional community of people around the world, all of whom at the same moment are dealing with the same strains that you are. Strategies for the body can be about the fact that dealing with mental stress also requires a lot of energy, so it is important to be aware of your basic physical needs and to deal with the muscle tension that can develop in connection with exposure to disturbing events. In our hotline, we make sure that we talk about which strategies we use, both in supervision and in our debriefing interviews. By doing so, we can also inspire each other to try new strategies.

Reflections from the **hotline analysts in ReportIt**

“To many people, working with child sexual abuse material, may seem like a horrific job. However, in my experience we have another perspective on this job in ReportIt. We have been able to change a precarious work situation into being a ‘nice’ time, where we can have quality time with our colleagues which include both private, personal, and hotline-professional conversations.” **Nadia**

“It makes me feel proud when I think about how our hotline is part of a national and international network that work together to combat child sexual abuse.” **Ann**

“It can be very lonely to have a job where I’m continuously faced with abuse being committed against children. You can’t really give someone, who is not part of such a task, a lot of insight into it. To me, it makes the bond and solidarity between us analysts incredibly strong.” **Julie**

"It is comforting to be part of an organisation that prioritises and acknowledges the importance of working to improve the psychological working environment. As a hotline analyst, it helps me to feel safe while focusing on the main task." Astrid

"Tomorrow, we do it all again." Andreas

"When I'm on my way into the hotline-room to analyse CSAM, I always think about how I look forward to having good conversations with my hotline colleague. To be together in all the absurdity helps strengthen the relations between us colleagues, and it brings a whole new understanding to the saying about pulling together." Rebecca



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