

# The Madeleine Foundation

## Asking the questions about what really happened to Madeleine McCann

Registered address: 66 Chippingfield, HARLOW, Essex CM17 0DJ  
Email: [ajsbenett@btinternet.com](mailto:ajsbenett@btinternet.com) Tel: 01279 635789  
Website: [www.madeleinefoundation.org.uk](http://www.madeleinefoundation.org.uk) Mobile: 07835 716537

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Mr Jim Gamble  
Chief Executive  
Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre  
33 Vauxhall Bridge Road  
**LONDON**  
**SW1V 2WG**

Monday 3 May 2010

Dear Mr Gamble

**re: (1) Freedom of Information Act 2000 Questions  
(2) CEOP's close relationship with the McCanns - New video produced by Jon Corner and released by the McCanns, using images of Madeleine McCann with make-up and jewellery**

We write to express our concern about the images of Madeleine used by the McCanns in relation to Madeleine on the recent video made by Jon Corner, which they released yesterday to much fanfare.

We do so for a number of reasons, including the very close nexus between yourself, CEOP and the McCanns (to which I shall refer below), and also of course because of your role as Chief Executive of CEOP, an organisation apparently dedicated to eliminating or minimising all forms of the exploitation of children.

The Madeleine Foundation is a membership organisation founded in 2008, partly to help learn the lessons from Madeleine's disappearance, not least to campaign against the practice of leaving very young children on their own, thus exposing them to all manner of serious risks, not least that of being abducted. In a context where the McCanns' spokesman, Clarence Mitchell, said as recently as 19 February in a Channel 4 interview that Madeleine's disappearance remains 'a complete mystery', we also continue to work with others to try to establish what really happened to her and we campaign on a number of child welfare issues.

The video in question features three images of Madeleine. One very striking one shows her in an unusual pose, shot from well below her

face, wearing make-up, including much blue eyeshadow, lipstick and jewellery, and looking unhappy.

The McCanns have claimed that 'the photo shows her when she was three after a raid on the dressing box'. However, it is very unlikely that Madeleine could have put the necklace on herself, nor applied eyeshadow in the manner shown in the photograph, nor applied the pink bow to her hair. The evidence from the photograph suggests that an adult made her up and of course an adult was on hand to take that particular image of her. Even if Madeleine had 'raided the dressing box', it is one thing to take a photo of something like that for your family photo album, but altogether another thing to release it for millions to see.

The McCanns explicitly approved the very public release of this video. As one newspaper reported: "Parents of Madeleine McCann, who went missing three years ago, have released a new video and photo of their missing daughter to mark the third anniversary of the girl's disappearance". The photo the McCanns specifically chose to feature was the one with Madeleine made up, apparently by an adult and not by herself.

There has been strong adverse reaction by many members of the public to this image being used in connection with a missing child. Not least was that of Mr Mark Williams-Thomas, a former police detective and now leading criminologist and child protection expert, who has often in the past spoken with strong sympathy and understanding for the McCanns. His unambiguous reaction to this particular photograph yesterday, and promoted on his 'Twitter' blog, was that it was 'so inappropriate' and 'so damaging'. With respect, we agree with him.

The McCanns have from the day Madeleine was reported missing claimed explicitly and on many occasions that Madeleine must have been abducted by a paedophile, or paedophiles, often described by them as 'predatory', 'evil', or 'monsters'. Yet the photo of Madeleine featured by her parents shows a child looking much older than her actual three years, due to the make-up and jewellery, as all the news media yesterday quickly picked up.

You may recall statements made by the McCanns claiming that they were advised by the police 'not to show any emotion' in front of the cameras. As one newspaper reported around the time the McCanns appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show: "The couple also admitted they had been advised not to show any emotion while in front of the media, because any potential abductor 'may get a kick out of it'."

It is therefore a matter of concern to us that the McCanns should project and promote an image of Madeleine which might well appeal to

certain paedophiles, some of whom are unfortunately attracted to young children.

The general topic of the early sexualisation of young girls has recently been addressed by the Home Secretary, to whom you report and who appointed you. As a *Guardian* editorial earlier this year noted:

“It is a year since Jacqui Smith invited the TV psychologist Dr Linda Papadopolous to head a ‘fact-finding’ review. Her report describes a world where young girls who can barely walk are first cajoled into wearing high heels and T-shirts with Playboy motifs, before progressing into a grim future dominated by an internet-based youth culture that pressurises them into dress and behaviour which defines them overwhelmingly as sexual objects”.

The Home Office report stated: “The evidence gathered in the review suggests a clear link between consumption of sexualised images, a tendency to view women as objects and the acceptance of aggressive attitudes and behaviour as the norm”.

I enclose a copy of a letter sent yesterday to the chief public relations manager for the McCanns, Clarence Mitchell, expressing our concerns. In the light of the exceptional degree of publicity given by CEOP to the disappearance of Madeleine McCann and your own high degree of personal involvement, we would request you to give appropriate advice to the McCanns as to whether it is right to use these particular images, and especially the ‘make-up photo’, to draw attention to a missing child. We consider it sets a most unfortunate precedent if the one girl whose image has most frequently been used by CEOP to promote concerns about missing and exploited children should now be portrayed by an image which clearly shows her looking like a much older child (as the press realised straightaway) and wearing make-up applied by an adult.

May we also draw your attention to one specific comment made on ‘Twitter’ yesterday: “If CEOP endorse this type of public relations for a supposed missing child, then their role in child protection has to be questioned!” This is your opportunity to say unequivocally on behalf of CEOP and on behalf of missing children everywhere that CEOP does not approve of the use of such inappropriate images.

Your degree of commitment, on behalf of CEOP, to the McCanns, has been immense, despite the doubts prompted by their being made ‘arguidos’ and being pulled in for questioning and the contents of the interim police report of senior police inspector Tavares de Aleida.

You have heavily featured Madeleine McCann on your website and in other publications about your work. You appeared together with the McCanns 12 months ago in a one-minute ‘viral video’, strongly

emphasising that Madeleine was still alive and needed to be found. You also appeared on morning news shows side by side with the McCanns.

You also invited Dr Gerald McCann in January to be the keynote speaker at a conference of the abduction of children by paedophiles, a matter that concerned many of us, as there is not a shred of evidence that Madeleine was abducted by a paedophile. On top of all that, Home Secretary Alan Johnson recently asked you to recommend a new British police force to carry out a review and possibly a re-investigation into Madeleine's disappearance and, according to press reports, you have already delivered your recommendation to him. In view of this intense activity on behalf of the McCanns, then, you are without doubt in a powerful position to advise them as to their choice of images being used to remind people about Madeleine. We trust you will provide suitable advice to them.

### **The role and activities of CEOP: Freedom of Information Act 2000 requests**

We understand that CEOP has a role as a police force and has powers to investigate alleged crimes relating to missing, abducted and exploited children. We have also seen recent publicity in which, as we understand it, you have advised children, young people and their parents to report possible crimes against children such as 'internet grooming' directly to yourself and not to their local police force. We have also seen recent publicity in which you have publicly threatened 'Facebook' with various sanctions if they do not adopt your suggestion of a compulsory 'panic button' linked to your website.

We presume that as a public authority you must be covered by the Freedom of Information Act and therefore under the FOI Act we ask the questions below. If you are not covered by the Freedom of Information Act, we trust you would answer our questions anyway, as they are clearly in the public interest:

1. What legal powers are available to CEOP and its staff?
2. Under what powers can CEOP insist or encourage children, young people and their parents to report alleged crimes to CEOP rather than to their local police force?
3. What action does CEOP take if they have reasonable grounds for believing that an offence against children has been or is being committed; do they investigate and if necessary charge the offender themselves, or do they refer cases to the local police service, or does it depend on the circumstances? If so, what are the criteria for deciding whether a case is investigated by the police or by yourselves?

4. What campaigning work, if any, has been carried out by CEOP to stem the rising tide of the sexualisation of young children, upon which so many commentators have remarked recently?
5. How many staff does CEOP employ?
6. What was the annual cost of CEOP for the last year for which figures are available?
7. Please refer us to any campaigning work CEOP has done on the risks to children posed by known sex offenders released into the community or to any statements made by CEOP on this issue.
8. Has CEOP expressed a view on current proposals, supported at the last annual conference of the Liberal Democrats, to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to view pornography and visit sex shops; if so, please direct us to where any such statements may be found.

Finally, to the extent that CEOP is effectively addressing the main issues concerning missing, abducted and exploited children, we fully support your organisation's work and I would be pleased if you could kindly send us a paper copy of your latest annual report.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Tony Bennett,  
Secretary