


PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version:

Force	Staffordshire
Police and Crime Commissioner	Ben Adams
Chief Constable	Chris Noble
Title of inspection	An inspection of how well the police and National Crime Agency tackle the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children
Inspectorate	 <p>HMICFRS His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services</p>
Summary of inspection	<p>Our terms of reference addressed the following question:</p> <p>How effective are police forces, the National Crime Agency and regional organised crime units at identifying and safeguarding children affected by online sexual abuse and exploitation?</p> <p>The inspection also assessed how effectively these organisations prevented and investigated this type of crime.</p> <p>We have made 17 recommendations aimed at improving the consistency of the police's approach and the timeliness of their investigations, reducing the availability of child sexual abuse material, and getting better outcomes for children.</p>
Grade	
Recommendations	<p>Recommendation 2 By 31 October 2023, chief constables, the director general of the National Crime Agency and chief officers with responsibilities for regional organised crime units should make sure they have effective data collection and performance management information. This is so they can understand the nature and scale of online child sexual abuse and exploitation in real time and its impact on resources, and so forces and the National Crime Agency can react quickly to provide adequate resources to meet demand.</p> <p>Recommendation 5 By 30 April 2025, chief constables should make sure officers and staff dealing with online child sexual abuse and exploitation have completed the right training to carry out their roles.</p> <p>Recommendation 8 By 31 July 2023, chief constables should satisfy themselves that they are correctly sharing information and making referrals to their statutory safeguarding partners in cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation.</p> <p>Recommendation 9 By 31 October 2023, chief constables and police and crime commissioners should make sure their commissioned services for children, and the process for referring them for support or therapeutic services, are available for children affected by online sexual abuse and exploitation.</p>

	<p>Recommendation 11 By 31 July 2023, chief constables and police and crime commissioners should review the advice they publish, and, if necessary, revise it, to make sure it is consistent with the National Crime Agency's ThinkUKnow (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) material.</p> <p>Recommendation 12 By 31 October 2023, chief constables in England should satisfy themselves that their forces' work with schools is consistent with the national curriculum and National Crime Agency educational products on online child sexual abuse and exploitation.</p> <p>Recommendation 13 With immediate effect, chief constables should satisfy themselves that their crime allocation policies make sure online child sexual abuse and exploitation cases are allocated to those with the necessary skills and training to investigate them.</p> <p>Recommendation 14 With immediate effect, chief constables should make sure their force meets any existing recommended timescales for activity targeting online child sexual abuse and exploitation, and arrange their resources to meet those timescales.</p> <p>Recommendation 16 By 31 October 2023, chief constables should work with their local criminal justice boards to review and, if necessary, amend the arrangements for applying for search warrants.</p>
Areas for improvement	

Police Crime and Commissioner's initial response

Commissioner Ben Adams welcomes this review of how police and National Crime Agency tackle the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. HMICFRS found that "forces are generally good at dealing with very high-risk cases but that forces are often not properly responding to allegations or concerns about suspects, leading to unacceptable delays and missed opportunities. And many forces often wait too long before sharing information with partners, which means they can miss opportunities to refer children and families for support."

The Voice of the child is now a specific focus across all aspects of policing and victim support and the office of the PFCC is focussed on partnership working and ensuring force and partners come together to support children in Staffordshire. With respect of recommendation 9 the Commissioner's office do commission National Provider Catch22 to deliver Child Exploitation Support for any Stoke/Staffordshire child who is identified at risk of/being exploited, the process for professionals referring to this service for support is clearly detailed on the local Safeguarding Children Board/Partnership website. Guidance notes and a risk identification tool is the mechanism for access to support.

Chief Constable's response

Recommendation 2

By 31 October 2023, chief constables, the director general of the National Crime Agency and chief officers with responsibilities for regional organised crime units should make sure they have effective data collection and performance management information. This is so they can understand the nature and scale of online child sexual abuse and exploitation in real time and its impact on resources, and so forces and the National Crime Agency can react quickly to provide adequate resources to meet demand.

Staffordshire Police has recently developed a new matrix to capture demand and track cases within our Safenet Team. This will continue to develop alongside the work of the NCA and ROCU to deliver against this recommendation.

Recommendation 5

By 30 April 2025, chief constables should make sure officers and staff dealing with online child sexual abuse and exploitation have completed the right training to carry out their roles.

Within the force Child Protection Improvement Programme a full review of training needs has been conducted. Work is now ongoing to ensure the workforce within each of the departments within the Public Protection Unit have all received the right training for their roles.

Recommendation 8

By 31 July 2023, chief constables should satisfy themselves that they are correctly sharing information and making referrals to their statutory safeguarding partners in cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation. This is to make sure they are fulfilling their statutory obligations, placing the protection of children at the centre of their approach and agreeing joint plans to better protect children who are at risk.

This recommendation is already completed. Within the existing Child Protection Improvement Programme Staffordshire Police have negotiated new arrangements with partners in Children's Social Care whereby immediate referrals are made when children are known or suspected to be connected with a relevant address or subject. Our performance data informs us that this is happening on all occasions and the recent HMICFRS Child Protection inspection provides assurance as to the force performance for this recommendation.

Recommendation 9

By 31 October 2023, chief constables and police and crime commissioners should make sure their commissioned services for children, and the process for referring them for support or therapeutic services, are available for children affected by online sexual abuse and exploitation.

The Commissioner's office commission National Provider Catch22 to deliver Child Exploitation Support for any Stoke/Staffordshire child who is identified at risk of/being exploited, the process for professionals referring to this service for support is clearly detailed on the local Safeguarding Children Board/Partnership website. Guidance notes and a risk identification tool is the mechanism for access to support.

Recommendation 11

By 31 July 2023, chief constables and police and crime commissioners should review the advice they publish, and, if necessary, revise it, to make sure it is consistent with the National Crime Agency's ThinkUKnow (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) material.

A review will be conducted by the deadline date for this recommendation and amendments made if required.

Recommendation 12

By 31 October 2023, chief constables in England should satisfy themselves that their forces' work with schools is consistent with the national curriculum and National Crime Agency educational products on online child sexual abuse and exploitation. They should also make sure this work is targeted based on joint analysis with their safeguarding partners.

A review of the force work within local schools will be conducted to ensure consistency with these national products.

Recommendation 13

With immediate effect, chief constables should satisfy themselves that their crime allocation policies make sure online child sexual abuse and exploitation cases are allocated to those with the necessary skills and training to investigate them.

Existing allocation policies should direct cases to the appropriate department to investigate these concerns but a review will be conducted to provide further assurance.

Recommendation 14

With immediate effect, chief constables should make sure their force meets any existing recommended timescales for activity targeting online child sexual abuse and exploitation, and arrange their resources to meet those timescales. Then, six months after the new prioritisation tool is implemented, they should carry out a similar review.

All national recommended timescales are adhered to within the Force Safenet team and this is tracked with the new performance matrix.

Recommendation 16

By 31 October 2023, chief constables should work with their local criminal justice boards to review and, if necessary, amend the arrangements for applying for search warrants. This is to make sure the police can secure warrants quickly when children are at risk. This review should include the feasibility of remote communication.

A review will be conducted to ascertain whether there are any issues that need rectifying regards speedy access to search warrants.

Police Crime and Commissioner's overall comments

Child Protection continues to be a focus of the force in response to recent HMIC inspections and the Commissioner will continue to monitor progress against these recommendations at regular performance boards.