

## **An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales (December 2023)**

### **Response from: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

Child victims of any crime are at increased vulnerability due to the very nature of being children, this vulnerability and victimisation increases where sexual based crimes are committed against them. The long lasting, detrimental impact upon children can be life changing. The challenge increases when policing lacks an accurate understanding of those perpetrating group-based child sexual exploitation (CSE) and the child victims being targeted.

This inspection report highlights that while policing has taken steps forward to better understand and improve its response to CSE over recent years, "*progress remains slow*". There is not a single area, but rather a number of factors which policing needs to get right to provide an accurate view and response to group-based CSE including an agreed definition across the 43 force areas, accurate recording and identification of group-based CSE alongside making use of disruption tactics. As Police and Crime Commissioner, while I have oversight of local policing, I also play a key role in partnership and multiagency working to tackle these complex crimes, recognising that policing cannot tackle group-based CSE in isolation, but that our partners are key in supporting us to help keep our children safe within our communities.

In my role as Chair of the APCC (Association of Police and Crime Commissioners) I take a national stance on working collaboratively with my fellow Commissioners and those agencies who influence and implement change. I will continue to use my position to apply pressure to those organisations acting as a blocker and where improvement must be made to help protect those most vulnerable in our communities.

Maintaining a victim-centred approach, using and adopting language that reflects the young victims being exploited is key. I know locally our officers and staff work hard to protect and safeguard those known to policing, but intelligence gathering is just as important to help build a working picture of the extent to which group-based CSE is taking place locally, and how this is reflected back into the national picture.

It's important to note that addressing group-based CSE requires ongoing efforts, adaptability, and collaboration across agencies. I will continue to work with my Chief Constable to persistently assess the developments to respond effectively to evolving challenges in protecting children from exploitation across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Donna Jones  
Police and Crime Commissioner

## **Response from: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary**

Protecting children from harm is a fundamental part of our policing strategy within Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary, as shown by our three clear priorities of putting victims first, the relentless pursuit of criminals and exceptional local policing.

In 2021, we implemented our Child Centred Policing Strategy, which includes the use of Child Centred Policing Champions across the force who conduct monthly dip samples of cases to identify good practice and any learning, which is fed back directly to line managers for implementation.

As part of the force restructure to bring policing much closer to the communities it serves, Missing Locate Teams were introduced to provide more formal co-ordination and ownership of missing person investigations. A key part of this is reducing the length of time someone is missing for and working closely with our Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) teams.

As a part of the force's Strategic Assessment, we also scope CSE and identify any emerging gaps, risk and intelligence requirements. This is used to inform our understanding and knowledge of group based CSE, enabling us to pursue perpetrators and conduct early intervention and safeguarding of those at risk.

In the past year, we have completed specific intelligence and analytical products which relate to group based CSE. This is used to inform our strategic and operational response, supported by our collaborative work with Child Safeguarding Partnerships to ensure a co-ordinated and holistic approach to tackling exploitation. This has been embedded within practice for a sustained period with oversight from our statutory partners. This will be reviewed against any agreed national definition and adapted and changed as required.

In addition to the current analytical work, we explore innovative ways in which we can consider use of new technology to support identification of victims of exploitation earlier, thus ensuring we have prevention of harm at a centre of our work aligning with our strategic objective of putting victims first.

Victims are at the heart of all we do and must never be made to feel that they are responsible for what has happened to them. The language we use, and the way we communicate with those who have experienced trauma is key and this has already been reinforced through force learning, including classroom training and via an animation which is available to all staff via our intranet pages.

We ensure that continuous professional practice is up to date for all staff and officers, which is aligned to any new recommendations both locally and nationally, which includes the National Hydrant Programme for child protection and abuse investigation. This is tracked as a part of our review against HMICFRS recommendations.

Deputy Chief Constable  
Sam de Reya

Recommendations:

**Recommendation 2**

By 31 December 2024, all chief constables should make sure that their forces have problem profiles for child sexual exploitation, each of which should include an assessment of the nature and extent of group-based child sexual exploitation. This should include relevant data from local partner agencies and should be updated frequently, at least annually.

OPCC response:

I will seek assurances from my Chief Constable that HIOWC has a problem profile for CSE, with an assessment locally on the nature and extent of group-based CSE. The problem profile should also include all relevant data from partner agencies and will be required to be updated on a minimum, annual basis.

**Recommendation 4**

By 31 December 2024, all chief constables and the relevant business user groups for police record management systems should make sure there are sufficient measures in place to identify group-based child sexual exploitation.

OPCC response:

Within my role, I will request from the force an outline of the recording for group-based CSE and the measures in place to identify this across the force area.

**Recommendation 8**

By 30 June 2024, all chief constables of forces that are yet to receive the Hydrant Programme's continuing professional development offer should arrange it.

OPCC response:

I know that HIOWC has the Hydrant Programme available to investigators in all departments, with particular relevance within the CID teams, CAIT (Child Abuse Investigation Team), ICAT (Internet Child Abuse Team), Amberstone (rape investigation team), METT (Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Team) as well as Op Marmion (specialist investigations).

**Recommendation 9**

With immediate effect, all chief constables should take effective steps to eradicate victim-blaming language in their forces.

OPCC response:

I will address this with my Chief Constable, seeking assurances that with immediate effect he has taken all possible steps to eradicate victim-blaming language within the constabulary.