



COMMISSIONER CAROLINE HENRY

HMICFRS Inspection of how well the Police and National Crime Agency Tackle the Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children

1. Background:

- 1.1 In 2023 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) conducted an inspection into how well the police and National Crime Agency tackle the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.
- 1.2 The report published on the 5th of April sets out the inspectorates' findings with regard to all national police forces in England and Wales, as well as the National Crime Agency (hereby NCA). Recommendations have been provided at a national level with implementation expected at a local level via Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC's).

2. Police and Crime Commissioner Comments:

- 2.1 As Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire I am pleased to see that Nottinghamshire Police has been seen as having notably good practice in a variety of areas. Our local information sharing agreements with statutory partners helps us identify risk and co-ordinate our response in order to protect as many children as possible. As soon as Nottinghamshire Police identifies any form of risk to a child, they will instantly share this information with children social services.
- 2.2 Furthermore, I am pleased to see that the inspectorate noted our various approaches which are in place to prevent harm to our Police Officers and Police Staff involved in investigating this form of abuse. Our approach to minimizing harm internally by slowly exposing officers and staff to the disturbing imagery gives officers and staff time to reflect on how this area of investigation impacts them. This is combined with various forms of professional psychological support and peer support structures in order to create an environment where officers and staff feel safe and supported.
- 2.3 At the point of inspection Nottinghamshire Police had also completed an extensive problem profile of Online CSEA, this in turn supported senior leaders in understanding the levels of demand and risk Online CSEA carried. The problem profile also provided recommendations on how to appropriately staff the problem in order to adequately address and respond to the prevalence of Online CSEA.
- 2.4 I have recently taken over as the regional Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) lead for Serious Organised Crime (SOC) within the East Midlands. In line with the Strategic Policing Requirements (SPR)¹ CSEA is acknowledged as a current national threat which in turn highlighted the need to maintain capabilities in tackling Online CSEA but also the requirement to collaborate with partners in order to deliver the most efficient and effective outcomes for the public.
- 2.5 There are always improvements to be made, many concerns raised in this report echo concerns raised in another report produced by the inspectorate in March this year evaluating the east

¹ The [SPR](#) sets out the Home Secretary's view of what the current national threats are, and the national policing capabilities needed to counter those threats. Within the most recent SPR publication the Home Office acknowledges that CSEA can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.



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midlands regional response to serious and organised crime². The report published in March found that the East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU) was not doing enough to disrupt CSEA, it also found that in Nottinghamshire neighbourhood police officers had limited knowledge of what SOC disruption meant, despite awareness training being provided for CSEA.

- 2.6 Furthermore, I welcome the call for national improvements and need for collaboration in effective data collection and performance management. In Nottinghamshire's most recent PEEL assessment³ concerns were raised around our local crime data integrity meaning that we are likely not capturing the full picture of Online CSEA. While this does come with a caveat that Online CSEA is not an explicit offence the identification of an online element within child exploitation and abuse is crucial in developing a proportionate response.

3. Findings and Next Steps:

- 3.1 Through existing scrutiny and accountability processes, the OPCC will monitor the progress made against the recommendations assigned to the Force. We will do this by liaising with our Corporate Development and Public Protection colleagues to ensure appropriate change is made and embedded into policing practice. The below highlights these recommendations/areas for improvement and work to date to address them:
- 3.2 During the investigation the inspectorate raised concerns that whilst Online CSEA cases were being picked up by officers, appropriate allocation was not being made to specialist teams to investigate them. The force must satisfy itself in ensuring crime allocation policies make sure online child sexual abuse and exploitation cases are allocated to those with the necessary skills and training.
- 3.3 It has also been recommended that PCCs and Chief Constables review all advice published in line with Online CSEA. Advice published locally should reflect the direction of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection team (CEOP), an NCA team with the aim to help protect children and young people from online child sexual abuse. I am encouraged that this review is already underway within our POLIT team in Nottinghamshire Police.
- 3.4 Furthermore, consideration within the inspectorates' report gives way how local forces should ensure their work within schools is aligned to the national curriculum and is reflective of the NCA education products in line with Online CSEA. To satisfy our arrangements I will ensure that our fleet of Schools and Early Intervention Officers (SEIO's) are well equipped with these products and deploy them in an impactful manner.
- 3.5 This report includes recommendations which require immediate attention and others which lead into April of 2025, collectively this ensures we are making long term impactful system change to appropriately address the prevalence and impact of Online CSEA.

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² [An inspection of the east midlands' regional response to serious and organised crime](#)

³ [Nottinghamshire PEEL Assessments 2020/2021](#)