

Response from the Police & Crime Commissioner of Devon and Cornwall to [Inspection of the effectiveness of police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation: A progress report](#)

Child sexual abuse in any form is an abhorrent crime and the sexual exploitation of children by groups of criminals, often over long periods of time leads to a profound physical, emotional and psychological impact on victims which can last a lifetime.

The police, criminal justice partners, the government, local authorities, businesses and the wider community all have a part to play in tackling child exploitation. My Police and Crime Plan sets out the priorities I expect the Chief Constable to deliver on during this term of office and in this plan I am clear that I want to see radical ideas developed and tested to prevent domestic abuse, violence against women and girls, and child sexual abuse.

This progress report from HMICFRS highlights the significant work undertaken by police forces, law enforcement agencies and other public bodies in response to the recommendations made in HMICFRS' 2023 report [An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales](#), which was itself undertaken in response to the [Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse \(IICSA\)](#).

Data accuracy and national co-ordination are crucial to combatting these horrific crimes, and I am pleased to see that nearly all police forces - including Devon and Cornwall - have now adopted the IICSA definition of group-based child sexual exploitation and I urge the Home Office and Department of Education to do the same, as per recommendation 1 in the report.

It is good to see that the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC)'s Hydrant Programme is having an impact nationally in terms of understanding the scale and nature of group-based child sexual exploitation, and by providing specialist training to investigators. I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account as the force strives improve how efficiently and accurately it can identify child sexual exploitation and group-based child sexual exploitation in police record management systems, and for the delivery of a formal Operation Makesafe strategy which clearly sets out how the force works with the business community and partners to identify and disrupt the criminal and sexual exploitation of children, and ensure that children are safeguarded.

Recommendation 1

By 31 March 2026, the Home Office, Department for Education and all police forces and law enforcement bodies that are yet to do so should adopt the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse's definition of an 'organised network' as a definition of group-based child sexual exploitation. And they should make sure they use this definition in all relevant policies, training products, procedures and guidance.

Action planned/taken: Devon and Cornwall Police have adopted the Independent Sexual Abuse Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse definition of an organised network as a definition of group-based child exploitation.

The definition is being used within the Intelligence Directorate. Relevant Policy documents are being identified to ensure the definition is referenced where appropriate.

Devon and Cornwall Police are also working with partners to promote adoption of the definition outside policing. For example, the Devon Child Safeguarding Partnership has agreed to include the definition within its Child Exploitation Strategy.

Devon and Cornwall Police are working with Hydrant to develop a child exploitation module for first line supervisors and this will include the definition.

Recommendation 2

By 31 March 2026, all police forces should fully adopt and use the Hydrant Programme's child sexual exploitation problem profile template as a minimum when preparing their 2025/26 child sexual exploitation problem profiles.

Action planned/taken: Devon and Cornwall Police have utilised the template and included it within its revised Problem Profile due to be published before the end of 2025.

Recommendation 4

By 31 July 2026, all chief constables should use the Hydrant Programme's guidance so forces can efficiently and accurately identify child sexual exploitation and group-based child sexual exploitation in their police record management systems.

Action planned/taken: Devon and Cornwall Police acknowledge the need to improve efficiency in accurately identifying child sexual exploitation and group-based child sexual exploitation within its record management system. The force is confident it is accurately recording crime in line with national crime recording standards and that investigations are being undertaken. Identifying Child Exploitation cases accurately and efficiently is presenting as a significant challenge. Devon and Cornwall Police have written to the Hydrant Programme seeking support in identifying forces who have successfully developed an IT based solution.

Recommendation 6

By 31 July 2026, all police forces should devise a strategy to implement Operation Makesafe consistently and include this in their child sexual exploitation data returns to the Hydrant Programme. This strategy should include the adoption and use of the rebranded Operation Makesafe police and partnership marketing materials.

Action planned/taken: Devon and Cornwall Police utilise Operation Makesafe in collaboration with safeguarding and Community Safety Partners. However, this has been in the absence of a formal strategy. Devon and Cornwall Police will work towards establishing a strategy to support consistent use of operation Makesafe and The Children's Society #LookCloser campaign.