

Response from the Police & Crime Commissioner of Devon and Cornwall to [The policing response to the investigation of online child sexual abuse and the management of registered sex offenders](#)

Protecting children from sexual abuse is one of the most important jobs of any police service, and in my Police and Crime Plan, through my priority of serious violence, I have asked the Chief Constable to explore, test and take forward new, radical and disruptive ideas to prevent child sexual abuse and all violence against women and girls.

However, tackling online child sexual abuse and bringing offenders to justice is an increasingly complex and challenging area for the police. As highlighted by this report, the police resource required for the management of registered sex offenders increases as more offenders are convicted, and I welcome the Inspectorate examining these two interconnected areas of policing on a national scale.

The management of offenders and suspects has been an area which HMICFRS have previously identified as inadequate in Devon and Cornwall, and as such improvements in this area have been a considerable focus for the force and myself over the last five years. Over this time I have seen significant changes in this area, including an uplift in Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) officers, improved approaches to assessing risk, the reduction of overdue offender home visits and risk assessments, and the return to double crewing on offender home visits.

Devon and Cornwall Police's recently published PEEL 2025-27 inspection report highlights causes of concern with the investigation of crime more widely, and with the force's ability to safeguard children and adults at risk of harm, and so there is clearly still more work to be done. As such I urge the Chief Constable to remain focussed on protecting children from sexual abuse through further improvements to investigation standards, and by continuing to work towards the recommendations made in this report.

I would also like to acknowledge the commitment of the officers and staff who undertake this vital and often extremely difficult work, and ask the Chief Constable to ensure that they have the training, resources and psychological support they need, to enable the force to meet the demands and challenges of this work into the future.

Recommendation 1

By 31 October 2026, forces should:

- review existing practices to make sure they use the Kent internet risk assessment tool and the prioritisation tool to prioritise referrals for all children and adult suspects;
- review their procedures to make sure there is regular assessment of intelligence and risk for online child sexual abuse and exploitation suspects both prior to enforcement and throughout the lifecycle of the investigation; and
- make sure investigations allocated outside online child sexual abuse and exploitation teams remain under the team's management oversight, including a central escalation policy.

Action planned/taken: Devon and Cornwall Police already uses the Kent internet risk assessment tool (KIRAT) for all referrals for adult suspects during intelligence development until allocation to an officer in charge (OIC). This process does not apply to under 18s, but the force continues to utilise a tiered approach to prioritisation and interventions in these cases.

Three monthly checks are completed for suspects on bail or released under investigation (RUI), alongside bespoke intelligence portal reports to each OIC to monitor updates on force systems for all suspects. This includes Police National Database (PND) checks, police open source intelligence (OSINT) research, and making contact with the suspect (every three months as a minimum) to establish any change in circumstances.

All suspect investigations remain in the Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT), with safeguarding interventions for children being allocated out to geographic Public Protection Unit (PPU) safeguarding teams.

Recommendation 2

By 30 April 2027, forces should review existing staffing levels in online child sexual abuse and exploitation teams to make sure that they have enough officers and staff to manage demand effectively and that workloads are manageable.

Action planned/taken: An uplift in POLIT was agreed in 2023 with the team creating a second hub in Cornwall and increasing design in Devon (35 staff in total). This was done to meet increasing demand and also to remove Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) allocation to Criminal Investigation Departments (CID) and enable POLIT to retain all National Crime Agency (NCA) generated investigations. This meets HMICFRS expectations of specialist teams dealing with this crime type.

The uplift remains ongoing with the need to fulfil 3 remaining vacancies. Workloads are at a manageable level with an average of less than 15 per officer. There is no backlog of allocation and enforcement is being undertaken within prescribed timelines.

Recommendation 4

By 31 October 2026, forces should:

- review their online child sexual abuse procedures and make sure that arrest and bail is considered and recorded for all suspects; and
- make sure that when online child sexual abuse suspects are on bail, conditions are proactively checked at least once per applicable bail period.

Action planned/taken: In Devon and Cornwall, arrest and bail plans are recorded by the POLIT Detective Sergeant (DS) on every allocated POLIT occurrence.

As outlined for recommendation 1, three monthly checks are completed for suspects on bail or RUI, alongside bespoke intelligence portal reports to each OIC to monitor updates on force systems. This includes Police National Database (PND) checks, police open source intelligence (OSINT) research, and making contact with the suspect (every three months as a minimum) to establish any change in circumstances.

Recommendation 5

By 30 April 2027, forces should make sure that third-party provision is in place to support families of online child sexual abuse suspects and that leaflets with contact details of support organisations are available.

Action planned/taken: Devon and Cornwall Police primarily uses ActsFast (a third party organisation which supports families across the South West who are impacted by child sexual abuse and online sexual offending) to provide support to families affected by arrests and investigations. The force includes a section in its 'family support pack' with the ActsFast content, including contact details, and this is given to every household that police attend by dedicated safeguarders, as they talk through all the support available. ActsFast have been involved in the delivery of POLIT training, which was delivered to all POLIT investigators, so they understand how to refer, and when required, make direct referrals on the family's behalf.

In addition, support and guidance for families was raised at the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) conference in May 2026 (Lancashire University); attended by Devon and Cornwall Police. MOSOVO teams have since been

provided with links to organisations which provide support for families, including Safer Lives, Hope After Harm, Stop It Now, Lucy Faithful, Stop SO, Children Seen and Heard and a new organisation called Talking Forward.

Recommendation 6

By 30 October 2026, forces should:

- review their operating models and governance frameworks to make sure they have a consistent approach to managing registered sex offenders across all teams, including use of the Violent and Sex Offender Register in line with Home Office standards; and
- review the data they collect, how they collect it and how it is presented and make sure that it represents what is on the Violent and Sex Offender Register to accurately assess and manage the risk of registered sex offenders.

Action planned/taken: Devon and Cornwall Police follow and adhere to the Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) standards, including but not limited to, the timeframes specified for record creation and update. Role and agency responsibilities are adhered to in terms of minimum datasets being completed.

ViSOR is the priority case management system used to manage registered sex offenders (RSOs) in the force. Whilst our local Record Management System will also reflect pertinent updates and information as required for wider policing, ViSOR is seen and effectively used as the main case management tool. All risk assessments, visits, risk management plans and actions are recorded and updated on ViSOR.

Since October 2025, the ViSOR central point of contact (CPC) in the force has held the role of Police Chair of the National ViSOR Standards Working Group and also represents the Southwest region at the National ViSOR User Group. and therefore is aware of, and contributes to, changes in ViSOR practice and standards, and ensures these are then adopted within the force.

Performance data is collected in a variety of ways. The ViSOR CPC uses ViSOR data extracts as source material for the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) QlikSense app. This is used alongside the manual review and collection of data by the MOSOVO Detective Inspector (DI). This data is used weekly with all MOSOVO supervisors to discuss and manage risk held by the MOSOVO teams. The data is presented in tables, graphs and written bespoke reports when required. Areas of current focus are overdue Active Risk Management System (ARMS) assessments, overdue visits, risk levels, MOSOVO workloads against full-time equivalent (FTE) and whether visits have been conducted in line with the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP).

Supervisors conduct 28-day investigative reviews using Niche (the force's crime recording system) to ensure investigations into Sexual Offender Register (SOR) or court order breaches are managed and progressed diligently and expeditiously, taking into account potential changes in risk.

Recommendation 8

By 31 October 2026, forces should:

- use previous demand trends and review predicted demand for management of sexual offenders and violent offenders teams for five years to make sure that they have enough offender managers and supervisors to manage this;
- make sure that management of sexual offenders and violent offenders team abstractions are recorded, reviewed, don't happen on a regular basis and don't have a negative effect on workload completion;
- make sure that management of sexual offenders and violent offenders teams have manageable numbers of outstanding active risk management systems assessments, risk management plans and visits and that these are assessed by both risk level and how overdue they are; and
- make sure that supervisors are completing reviews of active risk management systems assessments, risk management plans and visits promptly and within one month.

Action planned/taken: Data from the MOSOVO QlikSense app and also from the MOSOVO Performance DI are used by the force's Performance and Analysis department to formulate and present future demand at targeted workshops and to support bids for uplifts for staffing in this area.

The force has just tipped over the 1:50 ratio of managers to offenders and there is a live business case to increase the cohort to bring this ratio back within tolerance. The MOSOVO Futures Workshops data analysis has also predicted future resourcing requirements which are fed into work force planning considerations.

Within the MOSOVO team, there are no abstractions of staff to support wider policing work, all offender managers are protected and allocated solely to offender management.

As per recommendation 6, Active Risk Management System (ARMS), Risk Management Plans (RMPs) and visits are monitored via the QlikSense app and MOSOVO DIs. This is combined with weekly meetings with all MOSOVO sergeants to discuss specific issues and staffing abstractions that may impact the team's ability to work effectively. The force has an agreed tolerance (5%) for outstanding ARMS and

visits. When backlogs occur, the weekly meetings are used to set clear priorities for teams focussing on risk and time passed since last assessment.

Additional work has been ongoing in DCP for the last 18 months, using ViSOR extracted data, to look ahead and identify peak months for each team when demand will be high. This then allows the force to identify suitable times to pull work forwards to 'flatten the curve' and ensure effective year-round RSO management.

All supervisors in Devon and Cornwall Police have been given access and guidance to pick up the supervisory responsibility for each other. Meaning when backlogs in supervisory sign off occur this can be dealt with as a wider team. Qualitative audits are also completed led by the ViSOR CPC and MOSOVO DI. During these, a specific area or theme is pre-agreed, alongside standing audit areas which includes supervisor sign offs.

The ViSOR CPC and MOSOVO DIs have access to view all the MOSOVO Supervisors 'to do lists' and can identify any backlogs in sign off exceeding one month.

Devon and Cornwall Police compares MOSOVO performance with regional forces and nationally, to share good practice, identify areas for improvement and maintain optimum performance.

Attendance at both regional and national meeting helps identify trends, themes and anticipate demand, along with strategies to manage that demand.

Recommendation 10

By 31 October 2026, forces should make sure that:

- home visits are unannounced and carried out in pairs to comply with the College of Policing authorised professional practice for the management of sexual offenders and violent offenders;
- visits that don't comply with the authorised professional practice for the management of sexual offenders and violent offenders are authorised, the rationale is recorded on the Violent and Sex Offender Register and that a system is in place to allow assessment of the decision;
- any reactively-managed registered sex offenders meet the conditions set out in the authorised professional practice for the management of sexual offenders and violent offenders; and
- they carry out and assess Police National Database checks on registered sex offenders.

Action planned/taken: Unannounced visit percentages are captured in the ViSOR extract and presented in the QlikSense app. Devon and Cornwall police currently sits at

85% of visits being unannounced. All visits are double crewed unless authorised by a DI to be single crewed. This decision is recorded on a ViSOR activity log within the visit text on ViSOR.

Double crewed visits were specifically monitored and proactively reported on for a period of time. They are now considered business as usual, and this is supported by the data being shown in ViSOR extracts downloaded and reviewed by the ViSOR CPC frequently.

The vast majority of reactively managed RSOs meet the APP requirements. In very rare circumstances where this is not the case, the subjects' circumstances are reviewed and a policy decision recorded by the MOSOVO DI.

PND checks are conducted by the ViSOR Intelligence Unit on an annual basis to support the ARMS assessment/visit if probation are the lead agency. PND checks are also conducted in between annual checks as and when intelligence supports their need.

Recommendation 15

By 31 October 2026, forces should:

- make sure psychological health screening is mandatory and provided at least annually (as per guidance from the National Police Wellbeing Service) for management of sexual offenders and violent offenders and online child sexual abuse and exploitation team members and supervisors with access to follow-on well-being services; and
- make sure that management of sexual offenders and violent offenders and online child sexual abuse and exploitation team supervisors have regular trauma-informed training and knowledge sharing to identify signs of trauma, burnout and other well-being issues and that they can refer to and access timely support and treatment where needed.

Action planned/taken: 12-month psychological screening is available to all offender managers and POLIT Officers. POLIT have an additional offering of a six month in person consultation with an allocated psychologist.

There is an ongoing wellbeing project in collaboration with the University of Exeter. This has seen consultation and co-design sessions between offender managers and wellbeing researchers which has resulted in the production of recommendations and an action plan to address wellbeing across MOSOVO teams.

Recommendation 16

By 31 October 2026, forces should make sure that they have a strong service level agreement in place with the Probation Service and that they have a two-way process for review, feedback and escalation to make sure safeguarding opportunities aren't being missed.

Action planned/taken: Geographic MOSOVO teams are well linked in with their local probation officers. MOSOVO supervisors meet monthly with senior probation officers to build relationships, discuss cases and ensure effective information sharing.

The Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Strategic Management Board meets quarterly. Senior leaders from police and probation, as well as other 'duty to cooperate' agencies discuss standing agenda items, MAPPA demand and working practices across Devon and Cornwall. Devon and Cornwall Police has a MAPPA force lead (DCI, Head of MOSOVO) who can review feedback on MAPPA cases, discuss with probation unit eads and provide early resolution where required. The Strategic Management Board is used as an escalation point.

Learning is shared by police and probation when an initial police internal management review (PIMR) is completed or a serious further offence (SFO) on jointly managed cases occurs to identify opportunities to improve practice.