



## **Norfolk's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

Section 55 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond and publish comments on all inspection reports pertaining to your force within 56 days of report publication.

### **Inspection Title:**

An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation: A progress report

### **Published on:**

24 October 2025

### **Publication Types:**

Child Protection

### **Police Forces:**

All local forces in England and Wales

### **Link to Report:**

[Inspection of the effectiveness of police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation: A progress report - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

### **Section 55 Response Deadline:**

19 December 2025

### **Key Findings**

Between 2015 and 2022, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) published 19 reports on 15 investigations, an interim report and a final report. In these reports, the IICSA sets out the extent to which institutions have failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

In its February 2022 investigation report, 'Child sexual exploitation by organised networks', the IICSA said that children were being sexually exploited by networks in all parts of England and Wales in the most degrading and destructive ways. There was evidence of extensive failures by police forces and local authorities.

The IICSA reports highlight the repeated failures by the police and other public services to identify and take seriously the threat of group-based child sexual exploitation. In March 2022, the then Home Secretary commissioned His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to carry out an inspection into the policing of this especially harmful form of criminality.

HMICFRS published their findings in their 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'.

In January 2025, the then Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to review the progress made since the 2023 report.

Based on the inspectorate's most recent findings in respect of the area for improvement HMICFRS issued in 2023, they consider that police forces have made the necessary improvements. HMICFRS have therefore closed this area for improvement. Four recommendations have either been met in full or are nearing completion in a clear programme of work. One recommendation isn't due for completion until March 2026. However, four recommendations, all of which relate to data, flagging and the IICSA definition of group-based child sexual exploitation, haven't been met and are overdue. In this progress report, HMICFRS make six new recommendations.

## **Recommendations**

There were six new recommendations made within the report, four of which are directed at Chief Constables nationally:

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Areas For Improvement**

There were no areas for improvement.

## **Chief Constable response to report and any Recommendations/Areas For Improvement**

I acknowledge this report by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), which reviews the progress made by police forces and other law enforcement bodies in addressing the recommendations set out by HMICFRS in 2023 following their inspection into the effectiveness of responses to group-based child sexual exploitation. Protecting vulnerable children from exploitation remains a priority for Norfolk Constabulary, and I accept the four new recommendations for policing.

Since the publication of the 2023 report, Norfolk Constabulary has taken significant steps to strengthen its approach to tackling group-based child sexual exploitation. We have adopted the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) definition of group-based child sexual exploitation and are embedding it across policies, training, procedures, and guidance. This definition is now included in our force-wide Child Protection policy and operational practices.

We have also implemented the Hydrant Programme's methodology and template for our Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) strategic profile. Our latest CSAE profile, published in May 2025, was developed using the Hydrant Programme templates and data returns. Future iterations will incorporate additional partnership data to provide a more complete understanding of the threat.

To further improve our ability to effectively and accurately identify child sexual exploitation and group-based child sexual exploitation, we have implemented overt Police National Computer (PNC) markers and flags within our Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) processes. We have also produced and launched a Child Protection Reference Tool, which provides clear guidance on the IICSA definition of group-based child sexual exploitation and is accessible to all officers. Additionally, we will be piloting the Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) Programme Intelligence Classification Engine (ICE), which uses advanced natural language processing to enhance detection of potential cases. We are also implementing recommendations from the Regional and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (ROCTA) regarding the recording of group-based child sexual exploitation.

In relation to Operation Makesafe, a multi-agency working group has been established to deliver targeted training and awareness campaigns across the hospitality sector and other identified risk areas. Intelligence-led activity has focused on hotels and premises in Norwich and Great Yarmouth, with plans to expand further. These efforts are aligned with national guidance and branding to ensure consistency and impact.

While good progress has been made since HMICFRS published its 2023 inspection report, we recognise that further work is required to fully meet the new recommendations. We remain committed to working closely with the Hydrant Programme, statutory partners, and other stakeholders to deliver continued improvements.

## **PCC response to report and any Recommendations/Areas For Improvement**

I welcome the HMICFRS report into the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation. While it is disappointing that in some areas, the previous recommendations had not yet (at the time of inspection) been implemented, people in Norfolk can have some significant reassurance in the fact that the Constabulary had done so.

The work of the national Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) Programme here in Norfolk, means that there is a particularly close working relationship between the Constabulary and that programme. This is of significant benefit to the county, and I hope will continue to develop over time.

Whilst the inspectorates previous recommendations were implemented, I particularly welcome the Constabulary's commitment to continuous learning and improvement in this vital area of work. I look forward to seeing further developments in this area over the coming months.

### **For Office Use Only:**

- Response forwarded to the Chief Constable.
- Response forwarded to the Norfolk Police and Crime Panel.
- Response submitted to the HMICFRS monitoring portal.
- Response published on the OPCON website.