

<b>Subject</b>	<u>An inspection of how well the police and National Crime Agency tackle the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children</u>
<b>Date</b>	21/04/23
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To provide Suffolk Constabulary's response to recommendations made in the above report made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services regarding the response to online CSA / CSE.

The HMICFRS report's findings are welcomed in terms of seeking national improvements in the response to the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

A number of the broader recommendations will ensure greater guidance and support is provided to local forces in this critical area of policing.

The following report provides a summary of Suffolk Constabulary's position relative to those recommendations which are specifically made to Chief Constables.

**Recommendation 8** *By 31 July 2023, chief constables should satisfy themselves that they are correctly sharing information and making referrals to their statutory safeguarding partners in cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation. This is to make sure they are fulfilling their statutory obligations, placing the protection of children at the centre of their approach and agreeing joint plans to better protect children who are at risk.*

### **Suffolk position**

Once sufficient details are obtained regarding the identity of the suspect/address, intelligence checks are made to accurately establish who lives at the address. These checks include contact via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) where statutory partners are asked to share information. Children and Young Persons Services (CYPS), Health and Education, alongside HM Revenue and Custom checks (for child benefit paid to an address) contribute to this process. It is particularly important health are involved to avoid pre-school children being missed in educational searches. If it is established that children are present from the outset, a MASH referral is made and again, information is shared. Where possible, allocated social workers from Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS) join officers at the time of enforcement whereby children can be spoken to jointly and ongoing support/plans agreed in line with Voice of the Child protocols. The KIRAT risk assessment tool is applied, and investigations completed within the advised timescales. Where an allocated social worker is assigned to a family already, they are informed and consulted about the process in advance of enforcement. A secondary, updated MASH referral is then made immediately post enforcement, especially in cases where CYPS choose not to attend.

Where children are identified at an address, the suspect is always arrested and bailed with Sexual Harm Prevention Order style bail conditions applied, to ensure safeguarding is completed at the earliest opportunity.

Where a suspect is found to be working in a position of trust, the same applies, and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) referrals submitted and common law disclosures made, whilst the suspect is in custody.

**Recommendation 9** *By 31 October 2023, chief constables and police and crime commissioners should make sure their commissioned services for children, and the process for referring them for support or therapeutic services, are available for children affected by online sexual abuse and exploitation.*

### **Suffolk position**

As a Force we regularly refer child victims and their families to Suffolk victims service providers. Many of these are commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner. 'Brave Futures' provide support for children up to the age of 18 by completing a full needs assessment and then implementing a tailored support plan. They also offer support to parents and siblings of the child victim. 'Survivors in transition' offers talking therapies and group sessions for children over the age of 13. Referrals are completed by both the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) and frontline Officers. Whilst services offer support for child victims of sexual abuse, a gap exists for support that is specially tailored to those that have suffered online abuse and exploitation. Therapeutic services for children is an area which would benefit from further provision.

**Recommendation 11** *By 31 July 2023, chief constables and police and crime commissioners should review the advice they publish, and, if necessary, revise it, to make sure it is consistent with the National Crime Agency's ThinkUKnow (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) material.*

### **Suffolk position**

The NCA CEOP page, is already available on the Suffolk Constabulary public website with the link below:

[Child Sexual Exploitation | Suffolk Constabulary](#)

The advice on the page is consistent with the NCA material.

**Recommendation 12** *By 31 October 2023, chief constables in England should satisfy themselves that their forces' work with schools is consistent with the national curriculum and National Crime Agency educational products on online child sexual abuse and exploitation. They should also make sure this work is targeted based on joint analysis with their safeguarding partners.*

### **Suffolk Position**

Suffolk Constabulary manages its educational work with schools through its ONECOPSTOP initiative. Products delivered are produced with the approval of local education partners to ensure they are consistent with relationship and sex education (RSE) and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) requirements. Delivery is split into four key areas; County Lines; Knife Crime; Healthy Relationships; and Online Safety / social media. The content delivered is separated into Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 & 16 plus. The force also delivers dedicated exploitation inputs.

Materials relating to internet safety are developed with digital SMEs using National Crime Agency (NCA) materials, however these predominantly focus on personal online safety and indecent imagery.

The force reviews its educational materials with partners at the end of every school year, in preparation for the following year. As part of this year's review, the force will further consider delivery around online exploitation with partners and consider whether any further enhancement is needed. This will continue to be in line with RSHE/PSHE and NCA products.

Suffolk Constabulary takes a targeted approach for all its educational inputs, using information from a variety of partners to scale and enhance our provision according to risk and need.

**Recommendation 13** *With immediate effect, chief constables should satisfy themselves that their crime allocation policies make sure online child sexual abuse and exploitation cases are allocated to those with the necessary skills and training to investigate them.*

### **Suffolk Position**

Suffolk has introduced a new child exploitation policy which covers the forces expectations and response to the disruption, prevention, and investigation of child exploitation. All Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation investigation are now reviewed by a Detective Sergeant who will evaluate the risk and determine whether the investigation is retained by a specialist Detective resource or whether it is suitable for allocation to non-detective CPC resource (County Policing Command) and onward investigation. An investigation deemed as high risk will always remain with a specialist resource.

A Standard Operating Procedure has been introduced for self-generated sexual imagery which again details the constabulary's response and the expectations of staff. CPC officers attend in the first instance but if aggravating factors exist then the Internet Child Abuse Investigation Team (ICAIT) Detective Sergeant will review the suitability of the investigation remaining with CPC. Whilst it would be desirable for our ICAIT team to own all investigations relating to online child sexual abuse the increased demand this would place on the team would be unserviceable.

**Recommendation 14** *With immediate effect, chief constables should make sure their force meets any existing recommended timescales for activity targeting online child sexual abuse and exploitation, and arrange their resources to meet those timescales. Then, six months after the new prioritisation tool is implemented, they should carry out a similar review.*

### **Suffolk Position**

Suffolk use the latest version of the prioritisation risk assessment tool KIRAT v3. In cases of Very High Risk – action is taken within the recommended 24hr period, often much less. Staff within ICAIT are aware of the need to be flexible in such cases and ensure the needs of an at-risk child comes first. In cases of High Risk, action is taken within the recommended 7-day period, but again enforcement takes place in a much shorter time scale. Cases that fall into the medium and low risk categories are actioned in the recommended timescales but are also subject of intelligence refresh to establish if the risk has changed.

The reactive nature of Suffolk ICAIT business model means that in almost all cases, officers would usually attend all enforcement well in advance of the timescales dictated by KIRAT. ICAIT work closely with our Public Protection Unit and conduct joint investigations where Registered Sex Offenders are identified as being suspects.

Monthly Key Performance Indicators are kept for all cases that are referred to Suffolk that cover demand, suspects, warrants, CPS submissions for example. The process of review and monitoring is done on a monthly basis.

**Recommendation 16** *By 31 October 2023, chief constables should work with their local criminal justice boards to review and, if necessary, amend the arrangements for applying for search warrants. This is to make sure the police can secure warrants quickly when children are at risk. This review should include the feasibility of remote communication.*

### **Suffolk Position**

The warrant application scheme operates across the Southeast Region rotating across courthouses with police officers making their applications by telephone and paperwork being received and dispatched by secure email.

The scheme uses a web-based booking system. Police officers use a web-based calendar to book in their warrant(s) application on a date and time convenient to them. Police officers can access the calendar 24 hours a day. Applications will be considered between 10.00am and 4.00pm

Legal advisers will be responsible for ensuring the relevant paperwork is both received and dispatched in good order in accordance with the guidance and that all information is correctly stored and filed.

Applications will be initially scrutinised by a legal adviser who will then provide advice on matters of law, practice and procedure to the relevant Justice of the Peace, who will be rostered to consider such applications on any particular day.

This scheme envisages that all warrants will be considered under this scheme unless the scheme is unable to respond quickly enough to an urgent application or the volume of warrants is such that diversion to a location court site is preferable. This scheme will operate in conjunction with and to complement the “out of hours” search warrant scheme (which will apply after 6pm).

In terms of availability of slots, routine slots require booking around two weeks in advance, however, there are sometimes last-minute cancellations available. There are also urgent slots available on a daily basis, but those are reserved for urgent safeguarding or time critical operational requirements. There is also an out of hours service, but again, for urgent matters only. Urgent daytime slots are usually heard remotely. We are no longer permitted to attend the Court independently to get a warrant heard it must go through the booking system.

This recommendation will need to be considered by our local criminal justice board partners to assess whether current arrangements as outlined are deemed adequate in enabling rapid warrant applications.