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Operation Beaconport: Hundreds of child abuse cases under review to prioritise victim and survivor voices

Hundreds of previously closed investigations into group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation are being reviewed as part of a new operation focused on putting victims and survivors at the heart of the criminal justice process.

Operation Beaconport will review cases where police forces (across England and Wales) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) made the decision to take no further action against suspects between 1 January 2010 and 31 March 2025, and will run alongside the national public inquiry, announced by the Government earlier this year.

This national policing operation, led by the NCA and delivered in partnership with the CSE Taskforce, including the Tackling Organised Exploitation Programme and police forces, has already identified investigations that were incorrectly closed with no further action taken.

These range from cases where lines of enquiry were not followed up, to occasions where victim and survivor accounts were not being sought or recorded when crimes were reported.

Operation Beaconport will review cases to assess whether they can be reinvestigated and to identify learning, which will be shared with all police forces and will support the new Statutory Inquiry, which is being established and is an important part of implementing Baroness Casey's National Audit report on Group based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

So far, 1,273 cases relating to allegations of group-based CSAE, identified by 23 police forces have been referred to the investigation team. Of these, 236 relate to allegations of rape, which Operation Beaconport is reviewing as a priority.

For each case, a specialist panel of officers from Operation Beaconport will identify actions that should be taken to thoroughly reinvestigate any cases as required. Most reinvestigations will be carried out by local force police investigation teams under the supervision of Operation Beaconport officers, while some more complex cases may be investigated by the National Crime Agency.

In support of the national operation, the NCA Director General has today */5 November/* taken the significant step of issuing a Crime and Courts Act (CCA) tasking to all police forces in the UK.

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This is designed to ensure a co-ordinated law enforcement approach, with the NCA setting a consistent and specific set of standards for forces to follow.

Clear guidelines on the type of data to be submitted will be set, and any reviews by forces will be conducted to an agreed national standard, drawn from the NCA and policing best practice.

The review of NFA cases is the first of three pieces of activity to be undertaken by the Operation Beaconport team. Officers will also develop a new national operating model for how group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse are investigated, using serious and organised crime methodologies.

Building on published advice and learning from across policing, the operation will develop an increased understanding of child sexual abuse as serious and organised crime, particularly offender networks and profiling, to understand the evidence gap around ethnicity data, as well as gender-based violence norms that are driving group-based child sexual exploitation to assist future investigations.

Better data sharing between multi-agency teams and more coordinated efforts to track and disrupt offenders will also be developed to help law enforcement tackle these crimes more effectively and deliver better outcomes for victims and survivors.

Victims and survivors

We recognise that revisiting previously closed investigations may be distressing for victims and survivors and could result in difficult emotions. The operation is being delivered with care, compassion and a commitment to putting their needs and voices at its heart.

In close consultation with victim and survivor advocacy groups, Operation Beaconport is developing a tailored contact process, guided by specialist advice and national best practice. A trauma-informed approach is embedded throughout the operation, with working groups established to ensure transparency, regular updates and victim and survivor-led input.

The operation's mission is to support victims and survivors in accessing justice, recognising that justice means different things to different people. For some, this may not involve revisiting past abuse. Every individual whose case is assessed as suitable for reinvestigation will be given the opportunity to choose whether they wish to proceed. Specialist officers will be available to offer support and guidance before any decisions are made.

At this early stage, Operation Beaconport is not asking anyone to come forward, and officers will not be contacting victims and survivors until all relevant information has been carefully reviewed, to ensure we do not risk causing unnecessary distress.

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Operation Beaconport is committed to ensuring that victims and survivors are treated with dignity, compassion and respect. We recognise the importance of giving victims and survivors a voice and a choice, and access to support throughout this process. If a victim and survivor decides not to have their case reopened, their wishes will be fully respected.

However, officers will carry out a safeguarding assessment to determine whether the individual accused poses a risk to others, including whether there is evidence of harm to additional individuals. Where there is credible evidence of other offending, steps will be taken to protect communities and working closely with the Crown Prosecution Service, investigators will pursue prosecution in the interest of public safety.

Where cases are not in scope for reinvestigation, officers will provide victims and survivors who contact Operation Beaconport with an explanation of why.

Further information on how victims and survivors can engage with this process will be made available in due course via the websites of the NCA, the CSE Taskforce, police services and partner organisations. Anyone who feels they need to seek help or speak to someone in the interim is encouraged to visit www.whenyouareready.co.uk for information on support available.

NCA Director General Graeme Biggar said: "Baroness Casey's audit of group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation demanded law enforcement's collective attention and a focused, UK-wide investigation which places victims and survivors at its heart.

"Operation Beaconport is harnessing the experience of specially trained officers from the National Crime Agency and wider policing. It's applying the tried and tested approach of Operation Stovewood and wider policing best practise to ensure victim and survivor allegations are investigated thoroughly and that perpetrators face justice.

"It will set out a blueprint for future group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation investigations to ensure that police forces utilise every appropriate tactic and tool available to prevent child sexual abuse, to identify and arrest perpetrators and to swiftly safeguard victims and survivors.

"I have issued a Crime and Courts Act tasking for policing to provide the necessary data to enable reviews of past cases, and to reinvestigate cases as appropriate.

"Operation Beaconport will ensure we right the wrongs of the past and that victim-survivor voices are heard. We must ensure that the horrors outlined in Baroness Casey's report can never happen again".

A/Chief Constable Becky Riggs – National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation said: "The National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, led by Baroness Casey, set out several key

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recommendations with significant implications for policing. In the months since its publication, the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Taskforce has been working closely with the Home Office, the National Crime Agency (NCA), and the National Police Chiefs' Council to ensure our response is robust, thoughtful, and shaped by the voices of victims and survivors at the heart of every decision.

“Operation Beaconport marks a vital step forward in our journey towards meaningful cultural change, greater accountability, and a truly victim-centred, trauma-informed approach across law enforcement and agencies responsible for child protection.

“In October, I welcomed the findings of the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection into child sexual exploitation and group-based offending, and it's clear, evidence-based recommendations aimed at strengthening our collective response to group-based child sexual exploitation (CSE).

“It is encouraging to see the progress made since the last inspection, particularly in how forces are improving training, and taking steps to eradicate victim-blaming language. These developments reflect an enduring commitment across policing to protect vulnerable children and young people. I said at the time that the work does not stop, and Operation Beaconport is just one example of the progress policing has made towards building on the foundations already laid to further strengthen our approach to tackling group-based offending.

“The NPCC remains committed to working in partnership with law enforcement agencies and third sector organisations to embed improvements, share learning, and ensure that all forces are equipped to respond effectively. In the coming weeks, we will continue to develop this work and look forward to sharing further updates as they become available.”

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Notes to editors

The initial review of cases focuses on England and Wales, but engagement with Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland is ongoing.

Given the size, scale and volume of cases, this is likely to take a significant amount of time. The Home Office has committed to funding Operation Beaconport for this year to support immediate action.

The three key programmes of activity include:

Programme 1 - NFA review

In January 2025, Police forces were asked to submit any cases that were NFA'd between 1 January 2010 and 31 March 2025, which involved two suspects and two victim-survivors. A second request for cases was sent to forces, this time with the criteria of two suspects and one victim. These cases are being collated by forces and will be submitted to Operation Beaconport. It is expected to take several months for all cases to be identified and referred into Operation Beaconport.

Programme 2: Create a Live Investigation Excellence Centre

In conjunction with Hydrant and TOEX, Operation Beaconport will develop best practice for the investigation of group-based CSAE cases. Cross-border coordination will be enhanced and training will be developed and delivered across policing.

Programme 3: Learning and Legacy Framework

Operation Beaconport will develop a rigorous new National Operating Model for investigating Group-Based CSE, with the Hydrant Programme. Using learning from across policing, there will be an increased understanding of child sexual abuse, particularly offender profiling, to understand the evidence gap around ethnicity data, as well as gender-based violence norms that are driving group-based child sexual exploitation.