

Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	1 September 2021
Location	Video Conferencing
Title of Paper	HMICS Progress Review – Online Child Sexual Abuse
Presented By	Elaine Galbraith, HMICS
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Yes Appendix A - HMICS Progress Review of Police Scotland's response to online child sexual abuse and exploitation

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide members with an overview of the recent (18 August) report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS). The report examines the progress made by Police Scotland since the strategic review of its response to online child sexual abuse and exploitation first reported in February 2020.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 HMICS published, in February 2020, a [strategic review](#) of the Police Scotland response to online child sexual abuse which made ten specific recommendations for improvement. In response, Police Scotland established a working group to provide focus on improvement activity relating to those recommendations.
- 1.2 In March 2021 HMICS undertook a progress review, intended to measure progress against the recommendations. This progress review, carried out online, assessed local and national improvement activity and involved interviews with key stakeholders.
- 1.3 The [progress report](#), published in August 2021, summarises the HMICS assessment of progress made since the strategic review.

2. Further Detail on the Report

- 2.1 The HMICS progress report details an assessment of progress against each of the ten specific recommendations made in February 2020. It summarises that Police Scotland have made a number of improvements and addressed backlogs in relation to online intelligence packages. HMICS assess that overall progress since the initial review has been

variable but support the focus on investigative response demonstrated through Operation Parror. Operation Parror has been a focus in previous reports to this committee.

- 2.2 The report also summarises that initial slow progress on other areas has shown clear activity since the start of 2021. The impact of the pandemic, and resource pressures caused, in acknowledged in the report along with the changing context for service delivery as a result of this impact. Additionally the report flags the pandemic related increased use of the internet by children and young people, positive for maintaining access to education and social contact, but also amplifying the risk presented by those who seek to target children and young people for the purposes of sexual abuse.
- 2.3 The recommendations made in 2020 and the subsequent progress review also link to other important areas of Police Scotland activity which are of interest to the committee –such as implementation of the cyber strategy and the recent crime audit and resulting improvement activity.
- 2.4 Based on the progress assessed and reported by HMICS, three of the ten recommendations made in February 2020 have been closed. These recommendations were:
- Police Scotland should ensure a strategic governance framework is in place, which provides support, direction, scrutiny and quality assurance to the force’s response to online child sexual abuse (R. 3)
 - Police Scotland and the National Crime Agency should work together to ensure that all capabilities are being exploited to their full potential and intelligence is shared effectively (R. 7)
 - Police Scotland should ensure that arrangements for deploying undercover online specialist resources are directed by formal tasking arrangements aligned to risk, priority & demand (R. 10)
- 2.5 All other recommendations made in the 2020 strategic review are reported as partially met, with progress acknowledged against all other areas. In addition, a series of further issues were identified and highlighted through the progress review. These have resulted in one additional recommendation being made – covering development of a wellbeing policy for police officers and staff who have a dedicated role in the response to online child sexual abuse.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications associated with this paper.

4 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct personnel implications associated with this paper.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications associated with this paper.

6 REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct reputational implications associated with this paper.

7 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct social implications associated with this paper.

8 COMMUNITY IMPACT

There are no direct community impact implications associated with this paper.

9 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct equalities implications associated with this paper.

10 ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications associated with this paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this report.