



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>SPA Policing Performance Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>16 September 2025</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Video Conference</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Group Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Update</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>ACC Steve Johnson, Major Crime, Public Protection and Local Crime</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

## PURPOSE

The objective of this paper is to provide members of the Policing Performance Committee an update on Police Scotland's activity in response to the Baroness Casey of Blackstock's National Audit on Group Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, published on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse was commissioned by the Prime Minister and Home Secretary in January 2025, into the scale, nature, and drivers of group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales.
- 1.2 In her report, Baroness Casey proposed a wide-ranging set of reforms to address the failings uncovered. These 12 recommendations focussed on the following thematic areas, namely
  - Adjusting the Criminal Law in respect of Child Sexual Offences
  - Bring perpetrators to justice and hold agencies to account
  - Improve information being collected about offenders and victims
  - Ensure better information sharing and better operational approaches across safeguarding agencies in all child abuse cases.

## 2. Police Scotland Response

- 2.1 Similar to the Casey Audit, a timeline from 2013 was mapped which provided a comprehensive description of CSE responses in Scotland, including Police Scotland investigations and its participation in various multi-Agency partnership groups leading to the publication of action plans, their delivery, changes in policy, practice, and training.
- 2.2 Following the publication of the Casey Audit, a review was undertaken to establish any current large scale CSE investigations involving networks as described by Baroness Casey.
- 2.3 Further review has also been undertaken into previous large scale CSE investigations undertaken by Police Scotland.
- 2.4 Notwithstanding the above, there is ongoing engagement with the NCA who are leading on the implementation of the recommendations for Policing. This engagement is specific to ensuring data from Police Scotland investigations can contribute to the wider UK picture.
- 2.5 Police Scotland is a learning organisation and seeks good practice across the UK and has engaged with NPCC and NCA Hydrant Programme with a view to utilising Force Child Sexual Exploitation Self-Assessments. Up until this time, Police Scotland, as a single body, has not undertaken Self-Assessment in relation to CSE or contributed to the wider Complex and Organised Child Abuse Dataset. Discussions around Self-Assessment and data, are wider

than the recommendations outlined in the Casey Audit, but the intention is to provide Police Scotland a foundation to move forward in terms of the identification for areas for improvement and enable a data capture exercise to identify previous group based CSE investigations for review.

The proposed self-assessment tool has 7 thematic areas which includes Victims and Survivors, Data and Analysis, Investigations, Training and Development, Partnerships, Disruptions, and Investigative Resources. This will provide valuable insight to our current responses and assist in benchmarking any improvement required.

- 2.6 Currently there is no mandatory requirement to collect ethnicity data or nationality data for suspects in CSE cases in Scotland. Indeed, there is no consistent approach in terms of the recording of ethnicity across various Police Scotland systems. Work is ongoing, led by ACC Paton of Policing Together, to improve Data Standards to ensure a consistent and accurate data capture can be achieved.

iVPD does record the ethnicity of victims along with their gender. In 2015, a CSE marker was added to allow data extraction relating to concern reports where CSE was a factor. In 2022, this process was amended on iVPD to attribute CSE markers to the person to whom the concern report related to improve focus on specific risk.

- 2.7 Police Scotland is the co-chair of the National Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Strategic Group, which has been in existence since September 2024. Its purpose is to increase cross-sector coordination and capability to address the risks and harms of CSAE in Scotland through the scrutiny of existing and emerging evidence and practice to inform, prioritise and agree actions.

The group have discussed Baroness Casey's Audit and its wider partnership recommendations, with partners committed to assess the current landscape of CSE in Scotland and furthermore, identify areas for improvement within our multi-agency approach to CSE.

- 2.8 Police Scotland will continue to develop and evolve our practice in relation to CSE to ensure the recommendations applicable to Policing within the Baroness Casey Audit are adopted and integrated into practice.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The financial implications for Police Scotland's response to the Audit are not yet known and cannot be ascertained until the outcome of the aforementioned assessment of CSE is outlined.

Following UK Government's pledge to fully implement the recommendations and specifically in relation to Recommendation 2, scoping for a national criminal investigation, Operation Beaconport, has commenced in England and Wales.

This work and the costs projected will provide a useful indication for Police Scotland once the assessment of relevant investigations in Scotland is complete and comparison made to England and Wales.

### **4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 As highlighted above, the assessment of the number of Scottish investigations which may prove relevant to the Baroness Casey Audit is not yet known. Therefore, the extent of additional Police resource cannot yet be ascertained.

Recommendation 2 (if relevant to Scotland), relating to a national Police operation and national inquiry, will be the most impactful. Previous large-scale investigations of this nature, such as the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry have necessitated significant resource, consisting of 1 x DI, 3 DSs, and 15 DCs.

### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

### **6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are reputational implications in this report. We are aware of the importance to maintain the trust and confidence of our communities and the reputational impact to Police Scotland.

### **7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are social implications in this report. Child Sexual Exploitation is an area which disproportionately impacts girls and has a profound and lasting impact on individuals, families, and communities.

## **8. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

8.1 There are no community implications in this report.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are equalities implications in this report due to Child Sexual Exploitation disproportionately impacting girls within our communities.

## **10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to consider the contents of this report.