

Press release: Home Secretary gives £20 million boost to tackle online grooming

The funding follows a successful regional pilot, led by Norfolk police, which saw dedicated officers operating online in forums and chatrooms, to identify and disrupt offenders.

The year-long pilot led to 43 arrests and 19 people charged, nine of whom were identified as repeat offenders and 11 of those arrested were registered sex offenders. Police estimate that at least 25 children were safeguarded because of their intervention. Among those charged was a male, who travelled from the south coast to London with the intention of raping a 8-year-old girl. He was arrested and charged through the work of the pilot and sentenced to over 5 years' imprisonment.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

Child sexual exploitation has a profoundly devastating impact on the lives of its victims, and it's a national policing priority to take on the threat it poses. We believe this project has shown early promise in tackling these complex crimes through an innovative approach.

Crime as traditionally measured by the independent crime survey for England and Wales is down by more than a third since 2010. However, we know that the nature of crime is changing, and through projects such as this we can help the police to adapt and develop the tools they need to respond to the challenges of the future.

The project will now be rolled out across the country and forms part of a renewed effort to tackle child sexual exploitation and increase protection for vulnerable people in society. This will allow police to build a greater intelligence picture and develop a coordinated approach across the law enforcement network.

National Police Chiefs Council Lead for Child Protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey said:

The internet is not a safe or anonymous place for abusing children. In collaboration with the National Crime Agency Child Exploitation and Online Protection command, the police service is doing more than ever before to stop the sexual abuse of children.

We are already arresting over 400 offenders and safeguarding over 500 children each month. This increased investment will enable us

to consistently target predatory offenders intent on using the internet to facilitate their criminal behaviour and intervene earlier to prevent children being abused.

This increase in our undercover capability will send a clear message to so-called paedophile hunters: if you have information about child abuse, tell the police. Don't try to take it into your own hands, you could undermine police investigations creating more risk for the children we all want to protect.

If any member of the public has concerns about online grooming, they should report them to their local police, to CEOP at www.ceop.police.uk, or to Crimestoppers. If you think a child is at immediate risk of harm call 999.

The funding is part of £52 million awarded by the Home Secretary from the police transformation fund, which through a police-led process, allocates extra investment to continue the job of reform and shape policing for the future. As well as tackling child sexual exploitation, the funding is focused on greater digitisation and efficiency across policing, making more than £24 million available over three years to help increase productivity and to enhance cyber security. Some of the police-led projects funded include:

- up to £12.4 million for the digital policing programme, including the Digital Evidence Transfer Service. This is designed to allow forces to rapidly transmit the increasing body of digital evidence across the criminal justice system.
- up to £10.5 million for national enabling programmes to deliver a joined up approach to flexible IT access and back office software.
- £3 million for the specialist capabilities programme, which will examine the potential of greater force-to-force collaboration across specialist policing capabilities.

Press release: Screening consultation on rare but serious condition in babies

The UK's independent expert screening committee is today (4 August 2017) launching a consultation to look at whether screening for Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID) in babies should be tried within the NHS.

SCID is a rare inherited condition which makes it more difficult for babies to fight off infections. An infection is not serious for most babies but can be life-threatening for those with SCID, with around 15 to 25 babies born

with the condition every year.

The consultation findings will provide valuable information about whether SCID should be added to the existing NHS newborn blood spot screening programme, which currently checks for 9 rare but serious health conditions by taking a blood sample from a baby's heel.

Screening for SCID would use blood from the current heel prick test to check if a baby has a low white blood cell count, which may make them more likely to have infections.

Before a decision can be taken, more needs to be known about:

- whether screening will save lives
- the number of healthy babies found to have low numbers of white blood cells
- what care and treatment is best for babies who are found to have low numbers of white blood cells for reasons other than SCID

Dr Anne Mackie, Director of Programmes for the UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC), said:

We currently test babies for 9 rare but serious health conditions as part of the NHS newborn blood spot screening programme. This consultation will consider key organisations' and the public's views on how testing for SCID would work practically within the NHS. We need this information before the Screening Committee can make a recommendation on including SCID as part of the newborn programme.

The consultation will run until early November.

The committee also recommended against screening pregnant women for vasa praevia, a rare condition that can cause heavy bleeding during birth. It had been suggested that screening all pregnant women for the condition could be useful in finding which women might benefit from a caesarean.

Screening was not recommended for a number of reasons, including concerns over the accuracy of the test and that screening would find other, more common, conditions which could lead to a larger number of pregnancies being wrongly considered at risk. The inaccuracy of the test means that some women would be offered an early caesarean when unnecessary.

As part of a regular review process all of the recommendations will be looked at again in 3 years – or earlier if significant new evidence becomes available.

The latest screening recommendations were made at the UK NSC's meeting on 23 June 2017. [Read the minutes](#) which were published today (4 August 2017).

All recommendations will now be considered by ministers.

This press release is issued on behalf of the UK NSC, an independent organisation, by Public Health England (PHE). For more information please call the PHE screening press office:

1. The [UK National Screening Committee](#) is independent of, but supported by PHE.
2. Information on how to participate in the public consultation on SCID is available at: legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/screening-recommendations.
3. The committee did not recommend screening for 2 further conditions: tyrosinaemia type 1 (TYR1) in newborns and thrombophilia in all ages.
 - TYR1 is a very rare, inherited condition which prevents the body breaking down an amino acid called tyrosine from food which can lead to the build-up of toxic substances in the blood. If these substances are left untreated they can cause damage, particularly to the liver, kidneys and the nervous system. Screening was not recommended because although the screening test finds most babies with TYR1, there is not enough information to know if the test misses other affected babies. The UK NSC is continuing to work with stakeholders to understand more about the issues.
 - Thrombophilia increases a person's risk of developing blood clots which can be dangerous if they break away and block blood flow to important organs such as the heart, lungs or brain. The condition can cause stroke, heart attack and deep vein thrombosis. Screening pregnant women was considered because women with thrombophilia may be at increased risk of blood clots in their leg, complications such as high blood pressure or the birth of an early or small baby. However, there was no evidence of benefit compared with current practice and inconclusive findings on the safety and effectiveness of treatment. Screening was also not recommended for newborn babies and adults as there was insufficient evidence to suggest that a screening programme would offer more benefit than current practice. There was also not enough evidence about how good the treatment is.
4. The blood spot test screens for the following 9 rare but serious conditions:
 - sickle cell disease
 - cystic fibrosis
 - congenital hypothyroidism
 - phenylketonuria (PKU)
 - medium-chain acyl-CoA dehydrogenase deficiency (MCADD)
 - maple syrup urine disease (MSUD)
 - isovaleric acidemia (IVA)
 - glutaric aciduria type 1 (GA1)
 - homocystinuria (pyridoxine unresponsive) (HCU)
5. Detailed summaries of the recommendations for all of the conditions mentioned can be found at legacy.screening.nhs.uk/screening-recommendations.
6. [Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.

Press release: Home Secretary opens new Police Investigation Centre in Hampshire

Home Secretary Amber Rudd has officially opened a new Police Investigation Centre (PIC) to serve the northern area of Hampshire.

The centre forms part of the police force's plans for modern facilities to help support the work of officers across Hampshire.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

Police officers and staff in Hampshire and across the country do a fantastic job keeping us all safe. Crimes traditionally measured by the independent survey for England and Wales have fallen by more than a third since 2010.

I am really pleased to open the new investigation centre in Basingstoke because by having modern facilities in the right locations means more officers' time is spent where it matters most – on the frontline, doing vital work to reduce crime in our communities.

The building integrates an investigation hub and custody suite, to drive more efficient and effective working for police officers and staff, especially around the investigation of detainees.

The time saved will ensure arresting officers can return to active policing of the community more quickly.

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire Michael Lane said:

I am delighted that the Home Secretary saw first-hand why we all think the opening of this building is a cause of celebration, recognising the delivery of a building that serves our communities through excellent design, build and function.

It provides the best of professional working environments supporting police staff and victims, witnesses, and our partners; as well as creating opportunities for savings through greater efficiency.

Press release: Flood defences put to the test in Northwich

A selection of temporary and permanent flood barriers, which would be deployed in emergencies, have been put to the test in Northwich.

100 metres of demountable defences were erected and 14 flood gates were closed as part of a live training exercise by the Environment Agency throughout the town centre on Thursday 20th July.

The exercise is the first time the full set of defences, which can be deployed within three hours, have been tested since the launch of the new Northwich flood alleviation scheme last month.

Over the course of the exercise, Environment Agency teams installed and took down demountable defences to practice their emergency plan for the town and ensured the rapid deployment of the additional flood barriers were in good working order.

The operation gave the agency workers valuable experience on the deployment of the equipment and significantly tested its response to future flooding.

Flood Manager at the Environment Agency, Christian Wilcox said:

The £7 million Northwich flood alleviation scheme reduces the flood risk to around 400 homes and businesses throughout the town. Therefore, it was fantastic to see the full set of demountable defences brought into effective action for the first time.

This was a major test of our operational equipment and allowed us to train up the teams who will work on deploying these defences.

Part of the flooding that Northwich has previously experienced has come directly from the River Dane and we were pleased to see that our road closure at Dane Bridge, during the test of the defences, worked extremely well and would provide a good level of signage and a viable alternative route when we need to deploy the defences in earnest.

Overall, it was great to see our practical strategies for flood protection put into action, via our joint working with the Cheshire West and Chester Council who organised the road closure. I hope such collaborative emergency response plans will give reassurance to residents in Northwich but, it is important to remember that we can never fully protect against flooding.

Residents should always prepare in advance for this by going online

at www.gov.uk and signing up for free flood warnings. Alternatively, they can telephone the Environment Agency Floodline on 0845 988 1188 and find out what they can do to protect themselves and their property when flooding hits.

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