



# OPERATION HYDRANT

Coordinating the response  
to non recent sexual abuse

# Annual Report 2021

Owner: DCC Ian Critchley

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## Foreword



Richard Fewkes,  
National Coordinator  
Operation Hydrant

Welcome to the sixth Operation Hydrant Annual Report.

This report provides you with an overview of the activity carried out by Operation Hydrant during 2021 and gives insight into the national picture of the trends, and scale of reporting of non-recent child sexual abuse.

Since Operation Hydrant's inception in 2014, the work carried out by the team has evolved and adapted so that we now provide coordination for policing across a range of matters relating to child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, and the spectrum of wider children's vulnerability. Also, the conclusion of the work of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in late 2022 will remove the requirement for Operation Hydrant to act as the interface between the work of the Inquiry and policing.

Because of this, 2022 will be a year of transition for Operation Hydrant as we work towards our future structure - there's more detail on this within the report, and I'm confident you'll join me in looking forward to the very positive changes ahead.

During 2021 there was a change of National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) lead, with the retirement of Chief Constable Simon Bailey. Deputy Chief Constable Ian Critchley now oversees the Child Protection and Abuse Investigation portfolio bringing with him a wealth of experience across the vulnerability sector.

I hope you find the Annual Report 2021 interesting and useful. Please do get in touch with the team if there's anything you read and would like to know more about.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Fewkes'.

Richard Fewkes  
National Coordinator – Operation Hydrant

# Executive Summary

For Operation Hydrant, the end of 2021 saw a period of review and reflection as plans were made for a new structure which will enhance the provision of expert knowledge and support, not only to national policing colleagues but also partners and stakeholders across the vulnerability sector.

Work to provide insight into the national picture of the trends, and scale of reporting of non-recent child sexual abuse has continued, and this is an area that will grow to encompass work across the whole of the child protection and abuse investigation portfolio during 2022 which is hugely exciting.

**Overall, many trends remain consistent. Victims and suspects tend to be primarily male, institutional abuse forms the largest portion of allegations, and within that, allegations of abuse within an educational setting remains the most prevalent area of reports.**

Of note is that to date, 34% of recorded outcomes are convictions. This is indicative that both specialist training and the results of learning and good practice mean that while forensic opportunities may not be present in non-recent cases as they are to contemporary offences, offenders can still be – and are – brought to justice.

A key focus for Operation Hydrant in 2021 has been the development of safeguarding referral pathways via a range of organisations. Over the last 12 months, 33 new partnerships have been formed, with British Gymnastics, the Anglican Diocese and the England and Wales Cricket Board being just a few of those that effective working relationships have been forged with.



This area of work will continue to be a key focus in 2022.

The IICSA has continued its important work. By the end of 2021, 14,147 referrals had been recorded which required an outcome. At the end of October, the Truth Project closed. The project was a listening exercise set up because the Inquiry recognised that victims and survivors could provide a uniquely informed contribution to understanding and learning from past mistakes and improving child protection in the future. Over 6,000 victims and survivors of child sexual abuse shared their experiences with the Inquiry and put forward suggestions for change.

The IICSA will publish its final set of Reports falling from its various investigation strands in 2022 before moving to prepare for the publication of its concluding Report, which is expected towards the end of the summer 2022. This is a driving factor behind the restructure of Operation Hydrant, as the interface between the IICSA and national policing will no longer be required.

The peer review and peer support business area has seen significant growth in demand for both services. During 2021, 14 peer review or support sessions took place despite travel restrictions placed on the team because of Covid19. Those who have taken part are unequivocal in their appreciation of the process, and the contribution the learning has made to some of the most complex and critical investigations seen in policing. The wider benefit to policing is the learning captured ensures that the policing approach to allegations of child sexual abuse continues to evolve and improve as the learning of today informs the practice of tomorrow.

The communications team have continued to support forces providing critical friend advice, acting as subject matter experts during the review process, and developing a coordinated approach across policing and partners where required to ensure a consistent voice at national and local level, and a collaborative approach with key partners and stakeholders. During 2021, the team extended its reach to provide communications support across a number of national programmes, including the Tackling Organised Exploitation Programme (TOEX), and Vulnerability and Knowledge Practice Programme (VKPP). This ensures a holistic and consistent approach to vulnerability across a wide range of NPCC portfolios and workstreams.

# OPERATION HYDRANT

Coordinating the response  
to non recent sexual abuse



## Operation Hydrant overview

Operation Hydrant is the national coordination hub for UK police investigations into allegations of non-recent child sexual abuse involving institutions, or persons of public prominence (PPP)<sup>1</sup>.

The operation was established in 2014, to provide operational coordination and deconfliction for live investigations falling within the criteria. Since its inception, the operation has evolved and now delivers against a range of strategic objectives and acts as a central hub of knowledge and expertise in respect of the most complex of investigations. The Strategic Objectives for Operation Hydrant in 2021 were:

- + **Improve the police service response to the investigation of non-recent child sexual abuse.**

+ **Increase victim, survivor, and public confidence in our approach.**

+ **Enhance the national coordination of investigations.**

+ **Develop best practice advice and be a hub for specialist knowledge and expertise.**

+ **Provide a review capability that meets the needs of senior police leaders and investigators.**
- + **Maintain effective liaison with strategic partners and key stakeholders.**

+ **Ensure a cohesive and coordinated multi-agency response.**

+ **Coordinate the receipt of safeguarding referrals and reports of crime on behalf of police forces in the UK.**

+ **Act as the single point of contact of the police service for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.**

+ **Provide a national analysis capability for non-recent child sexual abuse.**

Operation Hydrant sits within the wider NPCC portfolio for child protection and abuse investigations (CPAI), overseen by Ian Critchley, Deputy Chief Constable of Merseyside Police.

Funding for posts is provided through central funding streams including the Home Office and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). Officers and staff are either contracted or seconded to Operation Hydrant, and where officers are seconded, their posts are funded to ensure there is no impact on local front-line policing in forces. Grant allocations are shown in the table below.

Funding Source	Yearly funding (2021/2022)
Home Office	£2,131,000
IICSA	£728,650
Force Contributions	£134,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,993,850</b>

<sup>1</sup>From here on in where 'non-recent child sexual abuse' is referred to, this relates to Operation Hydrant criteria whereby it is linked specifically to an institution or a person of public prominence (PPP)

# Operational Coordination

Operation Hydrant has continued to evolve in line with national policing challenges and complexities, whilst retaining operational coordination and deconfliction at its core in supporting delivery of the strategic objectives.

Despite a challenging year for all, the ability to perform to a high standard has remained, supported in no small part by forces and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) who have continued to submit their monthly returns and bespoke requests as required. Force performance under the internal Operation Hydrant tasking process has seen improvements across the board and will be covered later in this section.

In 2021 Operation Hydrant continued to use the Home Office Large Major Enquiry System (HOLMES) to collate the mandated monthly force returns aligned to the Operation Hydrant criteria offences (on p43). Actions raised because of these submissions are progressed by the Outside Enquiry Team (OET).

To be fully effective, this process requires monthly, timely, and quality assured templated returns from each UK police force including PSNI, Police Scotland, Guernsey, Jersey, Isle of Man and partners within the armed services, without which the national picture will never be fully representative. Each of these submissions are subject to examination across the data already held both within the Operation Hydrant criteria HOLMES account and 84 other Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) related Holmes accounts nationally.

Despite challenges at force level, the submission and compliance with the requirement has maintained a high level with an average of 89% of forces submitting a return each month.

The deconfliction process identifies where two or more forces have a shared interest in the same suspect, victim, or location. When identified, Operation Hydrant notifies each of the relevant forces allowing the flow of information between them to take place and where necessary, identify primacy for the investigation between those forces. Deconfliction is not only undertaken for Operation Hydrant criteria matters. Forces have continued to take advantage of the opportunity to request deconfliction checks for nominals or locations to supplement their safeguarding and investigation obligations. Requests are responded to within 24 hours (Monday to Friday).



In terms of the impact of Covid19, we have seen absences within the team and restrictions on movement which has resulted in fewer visits to forces. To address this, OET members have progressed work streams using remote direct access to force systems or direct communication with the force representatives. This has seen the total number of finalised actions reach 2285.

The purpose of the internal monthly tasking process is to monitor the volume and quality of engagement organisations have with Operation Hydrant; identifying where individual forces may require support, and opportunities to improve performance.

The Force Performance Framework shows continued improved performance from all 53 contributing partners, including all UK police forces and other identified law enforcement agencies during 2021.



The level of engagement by forces is measured via a series of "triggers", with a higher number of triggers hit by a force signifying a poorer level of engagement. The overall number of triggers hit by all forces in 2021 has reduced by 39%.

At the end of 2021, 89% of forces had provided a force return on a regular basis and Operation Hydrant has seen a significant improvement in the quality of submissions. This reflects the positive relationship between Operation Hydrant and UK forces.

Along with the improvements in the number of forces submitting returns each month, 25 forces improved their individual performance in 2021 with forces providing a return on average 9.5 of the 12 calendar months. However, 15 forces saw their individual performance in this area decrease. Overall, 2021 has seen a continued positive trend in force performance.

Moving into 2022 Operation Hydrant will see significant changes to its working model as we will no longer provide the deconfliction offer to forces. This will be achieved via alternative means, including use of the Police National Database (PND). Operation Hydrant has worked with national policing leads to develop these alternative solutions. From 1 April 2022 forces will no longer be required to submit the monthly returns identifying new crimes that meet the Operation Hydrant criteria. However, forces are still required to provide updates in respect of investigations already submitted until 31 June 2022 which will see the conclusion of this process.

# Analysis and Research Team

This year's Annual Report marks the seventh year of data collection for Operation Hydrant. The Analysis and Research team continue to report on the scale and nature of non-recent child sexual abuse within Operation Hydrant criteria.

Throughout 2021, the team provided a variety of analytical products to support the delivery of Operation Hydrant's strategic objectives.

## Management Information Report/Quarterly Statistics

The first edition of the management information report was produced in 2015 with the aim of monitoring statistics relevant to Operation Hydrant business areas. A key section of this is the quantitative summary of suspects, victims and institutions which is based on the details of investigations provided by forces.

**To date, Operation Hydrant has recorded 9,018 suspects, 12,320 victims and has consistently found the most prevalent institutions to be educational, children's homes and religious based. Educational institutions in particular account for 42% of the total institutions and this finding is consistent with the wider context of abuse of learners that has been reported in 2021 (see Everyone's Invited section).**

All four management information reports produced in 2021 have been pivotal in resourcing and planning both tactically and strategically and are frequently used to inform briefings sometimes at government level. Data from the report is presented within the quarterly statistics publication which is shared on the NPCC website. As a result, the analysis function has continued throughout 2021 to build on the data to service external demand, such as, freedom of information requests.

## Criminal Justice Outcomes

A primary project has been the recording and reporting of investigative outcomes. By the end of 2021, 82% of the overall suspects had finalised outcomes for all allegations against them. The investigation of non-recent abuse has obvious complexities. Figures show that 50% of overall outcomes recorded by Operation Hydrant are subject to no further action by police forces (31% of these are due to suspects pre-deceasing an investigation).

**To date, 34% of recorded outcomes are convictions. This is indicative that both specialist training and the results of learning and good practice mean that while forensic opportunities may not be present in non-recent cases as they are to contemporary offences, offenders can still be – and are – brought to justice.**

Bringing offenders to justice after many years, sometimes decades, can be a hugely significant outcome for the victim, and can also contribute to safeguarding others.

## Continual Professional Development Analysis

A key piece of work is the feedback analysis originating from the continued professional development offer within peer review/peer support. Using data from questionnaire responses, analysis of key themes takes place to identify what is done well, and if applicable, where there is scope to improve. This allows for continued assessment of the training and ensures its successful delivery. In 2021, there were twelve events in total resulting in 183 responses from nine separate forces. More information on this training can be found within the peer review/peer support section.

## Deconfliction

The deconfliction function, as defined in operational co-ordination, is supported by the research team who maintain daily checks and robust recording of these. At the end of 2021, 79% of overall deconfliction checks were negative compared to 21% positive. Requests for deconfliction are twofold and consist of internal requests primarily made by the HOLMES team, or external requests from forces. The final figures for 2021 showed positive internal checks at 47% and external at just 7%.

In addition to daily functions, to meet emerging demand, the team were pro-active in the design, development, and delivery of new analytical products which have been shared with a wide range of audiences – both policing and external stakeholders and partners.

## Everyone's Invited

March 2021 saw the national press shine a light on the issue of abuse of learners (predominantly) in educational settings. At the centre of this reporting was a movement known as "Everyone's Invited" (EI). Founded by Soma Sara, EI is focused on exposing "rape culture" through "conversation, education and support." EI encouraged victims and survivors to share their stories in the form of anonymous testimonies on the EI website. Founded in June 2020, EI started to gain real momentum in March 2021 following the murder of Sarah Everard which sparked a growing focus on violence against women and girls. Over several weeks, more than eight thousand people uploaded their story to the EI website, which in turn encouraged a wider conversation around a culture of appropriate behaviours. This contributed to the narrative and wider debate around violence against women and girls.

**CLAIMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT MAY BECOME NATIONAL SCANDAL, WARNS SENIOR MP**

**EVERYONE'S INVITED: THE WEBSITE REVEALING UK SCHOOLS' 'RAPE CULTURE'**

**EVERYONE'S INVITED IS A 'ME TOO' MOMENT FOR SCHOOLS**

**REPORT BOYS TO THE POLICE FOR SEXUAL ABUSE, TOP SCHOOLS TOLD**

**SCHOOLS TOO OFTEN RELUCTANT TO REPORT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

Operation Hydrant was asked, on behalf of national and local policing, to coordinate the policing response to the EI testimonies, undertaking analysis to understand its relevance to policing and what action was required, as the testimonies bore witness to a range of behaviours from inappropriate through to criminal offences. The subsequent delivery of work around EI involved some challenges for the Analysis and Research team. For instance:

- research locating a force area for the institutions named in the testimonies.
- The classification of offences, which in some cases was sometimes subjective to the reader of the testimony. For example, there were differing interpretations of what "sexualised behaviour" encompassed.
- The team worked together to ensure the extraction of accurate and relevant information from the published testimonies to create a national and local profile of the issues, and to inform decision making.

The work required the Operation Hydrant Analysis and Research team to collaborate with the Home Office and Department for Education as lead agency for the issues.

A weekly "dashboard" was produced and circulated to all police forces. The dashboard purpose was:

- To signpost forces to educational establishments within their force area for the purpose of safeguarding.
- To inform understanding of the demographics from the testimonies available.

A summary of the key findings from the dashboard are outlined below<sup>2</sup>:

- + **In 73% of cases, victims were female (in 23% of cases gender was not specified).**
- + **The most frequently occurring ages for victims were 13, 14 & 15. In the case of perpetrators this was 16, 17 & 18.**
- + **In terms of perpetrators, in 90% of testimonies they were male (gender not specified in 6% of testimonies).**
- + **Independent schools accounted for the highest number of testimonies (as shown in the pie chart over the page).**
- + **Sexual assault accounted for 38% of the overall total, whilst those categorised as rape/penetrative and sexualised behaviour were similar with 23% and 24% respectively.**
- + **Together both independent and private schools accounted for 44% compared to 15.1% in state schools.**

### Victims

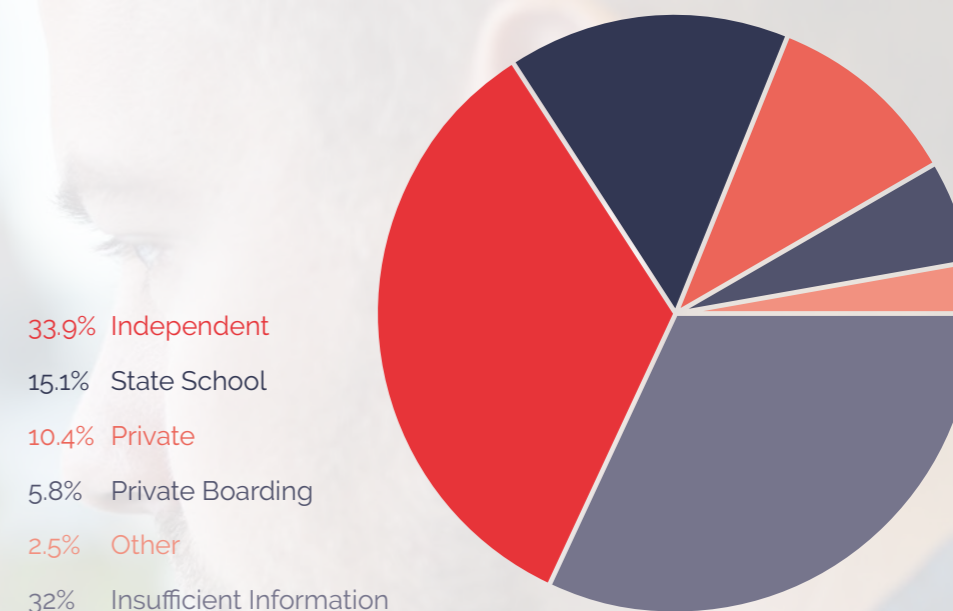


### Perpetrators



<sup>2</sup> The analysis is based on published testimonies only.

## Breakdown of Educational Type



Initially published weekly, the dashboard informed decision making and activity at both a tactical and strategic level, eventually moving to a monthly publication in line with available data from the EI website. It was shared with key stakeholders such as heads of safeguarding and third sector victim and survivor support groups and critically Child Safeguarding Partnerships. This helped to inform their approach to safeguarding priorities, determining pathways to support, and allocating additional resource where it was needed. While policing was not the lead agency for EI, the work of Operation Hydrant made a significant contribution to understanding the nature of the emerging issue, the impact on policing and resources, and informing the response of policing and key partners.

## Regional Reports

In June 2021, Operation Hydrant's Deputy National Coordinator, in consultation with the Analysis and Research team, developed a refreshed regional performance pack to inform regional meetings. The packs are produced on a six-monthly basis and delivered to 11 regional meetings across the UK, including the armed services. In 2019, the regional reports were originally designed to make sure that strategic leads within each law enforcement agency (LEA) had an awareness of what their force return rate looked like against a regional and national average. This was implemented following a review of returns and a plan around how to enhance the return rate and increase the quality of those returns. Before the regional reports were produced the return rate was around 44%, and over the three years since their implementation, that rate has risen. By the end of 2021, the average return rate was 82%.

This most recent version of the regional report provides the forces with a clear understanding of the Operation Hydrant criteria footprint within their force, their region and national comparison.

## Regions and Forces Map

### Scotland

1. Police Scotland

### North West Region

2. Cheshire
3. Cumbria
4. Greater Manchester
5. Isle Of Man
6. Lancashire
7. Merseyside

### North East, Yorkshire & Humber Region

8. Cleveland
9. Durham
10. Humberside
11. North Yorkshire
12. Northumbria
13. South Yorkshire
14. West Yorkshire

### East Midlands Region

15. Derbyshire
16. Leicestershire
17. Lincolnshire
18. Northamptonshire
19. Nottinghamshire

### Wales Region

20. Dyfed Powys
21. Gwent
22. North Wales
23. South Wales

### West Midlands Region

24. Staffordshire
25. Warwickshire
26. West Mercia
27. West Midlands

### East Region

28. Bedfordshire
29. Cambridgeshire
30. Essex
31. Hertfordshire
32. Kent
33. Norfolk
34. Suffolk

### South West Region

35. Avon and Somerset
36. Devon and Cornwall
37. Dorset
38. Gloucestershire
39. Wiltshire

### South East Region

40. City Of London
41. Hampshire
42. Surrey
43. Sussex
44. Thames Valley
45. BTP (Not on the map)
46. PSNI (Not on the map)

### London Region

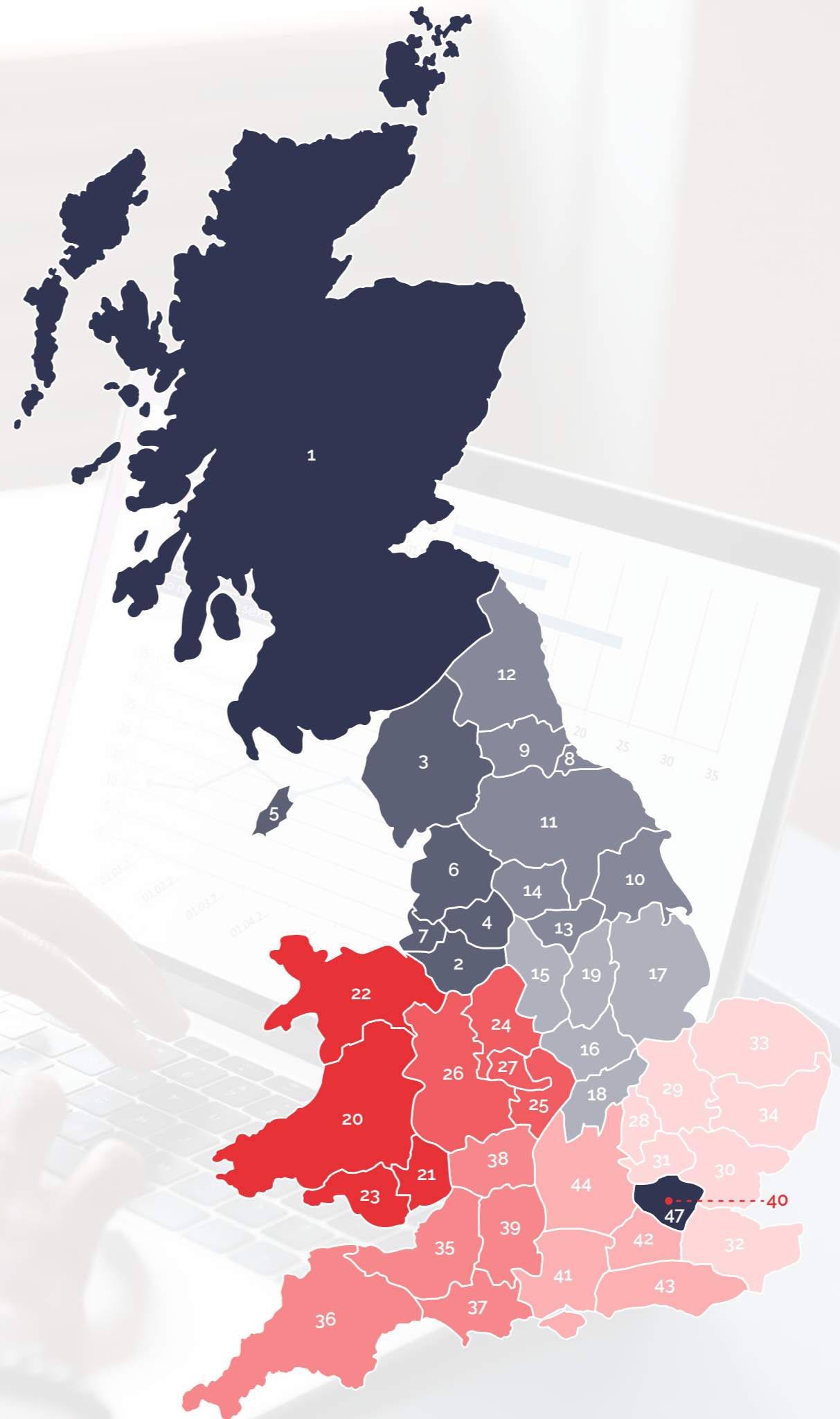
47. Metropolitan

### Miscellaneous

48. Guernsey (Not on the map)
49. Jersey (Not on the map)
50. NCA (Not on the map)

### Armed Services

51. RAF Police (Not on the map)
52. Royal Military Police (Not on the map)
53. Royal Navy Police (Not on the map)





## Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual abuse (IICSA)

In 2017, Operation Hydrant responded to a request to collate outcomes of referrals received from the IICSA. Since then, over 13,000 allegations have been identified of which 95% have a known outcome. In the latter part of this year, the Analysis and Research Team have worked towards completing this dataset using systems such as Police National Database (PND) and Police National Computer (PNC). This work will continue in 2022 to enable the provision of the richest information possible to inform the IICSA's final report which is due to be published in summer 2022.



## INDEPENDENT INQUIRY CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE



## Police National Database

During 2021, the Research Team committed a significant amount of time to the Police National Database (PND). All suspects received into Operation Hydrant via a monthly return from forces and LEAs are checked against PND. This is to confirm their presence and take appropriate action if they are not.

When a suspect cannot be found on PND, contact is made with the home force or LEA with a reminder of their responsibility to ensure their suspect is present and searchable on PND. This is in line with the core principles of the Bichard Inquiry which was conducted after the Soham murders in 2002. Updates from forces are received and noted.

In 2021 Operation Hydrant commenced a project with the newly formed Home Office PND Landscape Assurance Team (LAT). This was instrumental in the quality assurance of the work undertaken by the research team and in determining the reasons for suspect nominals not appearing on the PND. This work will importantly, assist in improving the quality of data held on PND that will ensure a more reliable and accurate intelligence recording system is in place for policing nationally.

Operation Hydrant produced a report to provide context about the Operation Hydrant PND checking process. This data is now utilised by the LAT to explore reasons why identified suspects do not have a presence on PND.

Their aim is to understand the reasons and remind forces of the official guidance they need to follow to ensure all suspects are present regarding CSA on PND.

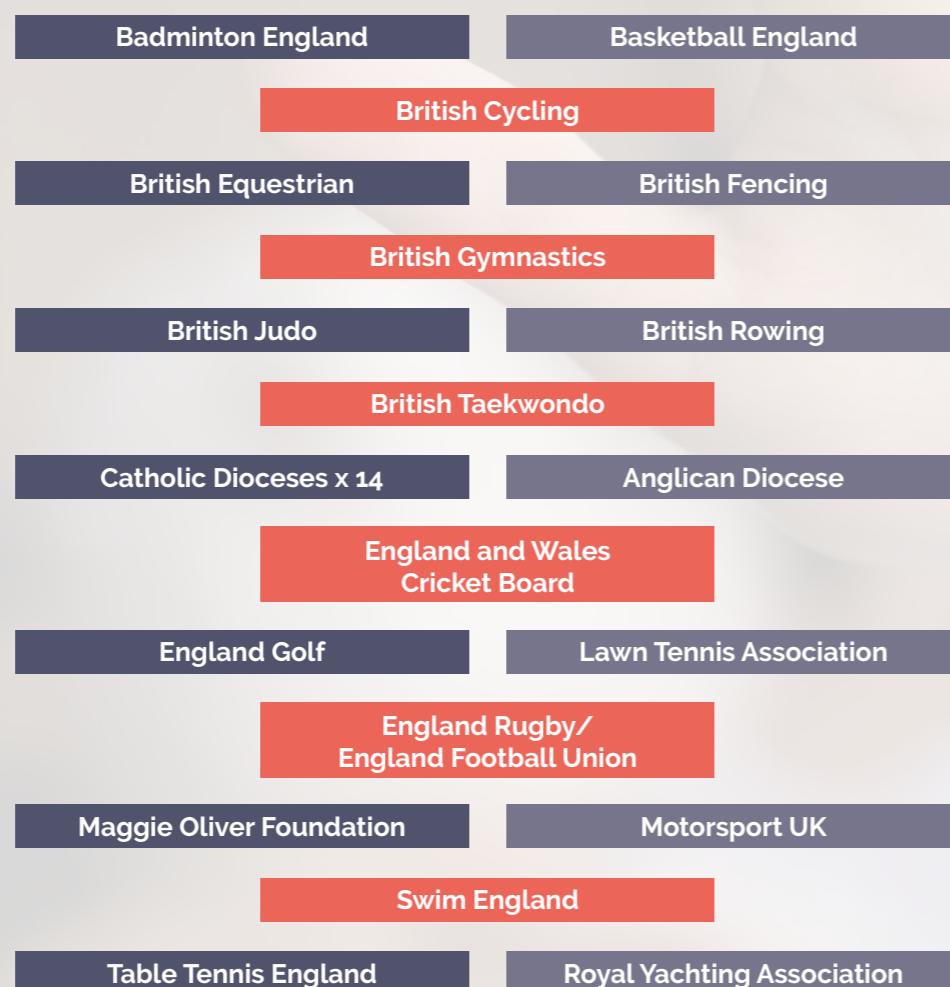


# Safeguarding Referrals Team

The safeguarding and referrals team continues to receive safeguarding referrals from the following:

- + Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)
- + NSPCC
- + Home Office
- + Sea Cadets
- + Catholic Dioceses
- + Anglican Dioceses
- + Sports

In addition to the above, 33 new safeguarding referral pathways with organisations were introduced in 2021 (see below for some of the organisations we now work with) and are detailed further within the Partnerships section:



Several other organisations were approached and showed interest with work progressing to bring them onboard during 2022.



Most referrals received into Operation Hydrant originate from the IICSA. These include allegations of sexual, physical, emotional abuse and neglect, many of which relate to familial abuse. Some of these allegations do not fall within the Operation Hydrant criteria; however, the Inquiry's terms of reference states that 'any allegation of child abuse received by the Inquiry will be referred to the police'. Many of the IICSA referrals contain limited information and in order to assist forces, research is conducted before dissemination. There is often open-source information, and the victim may also have previously reported to police. In these cases PND and PNC checks will often reveal the original investigating force, provide the relevant force reference number and any additional related information. This process continues to be beneficial in reducing the workload placed upon forces, particularly where police resources are continuing to manage significant demands and limitations due to the impact of Covid19.

**Operation Hydrant, acting as the interface between the Inquiry and national policing, receives safeguarding referrals and disseminates them to the relevant police forces for action to be taken.**

The process of information sharing and reporting concerns with local policing can be challenging for some organisations, particularly where there are multiple offence locations and perpetrators. However, Operation Hydrant continues to assist in making this process easier by working with local police force safeguarding teams.

**Operation Hydrant acts as the conduit between the referring organisation and the relevant force; it does not have an investigative remit. It is the responsibility of the relevant force to investigate identified offences and address any safeguarding concerns.**

Despite this, on occasion, it is necessary to make a direct approach to a victim. In these cases, the victim has provided consent for police contact, where there is insufficient information within the referral to enable dissemination to the relevant police force(s) or a full assessment of risk to be made. This direct intervention will also assess any concerns about the welfare of the victim so that they can be appropriately addressed. During 2021, 14 victims were contacted via email by the Safeguarding Manager; eight of these responded with additional information to enable dissemination to the relevant police force. Three of the 14 were first disclosures originally made to the IICSA and would not otherwise have been progressed due to lack of information.

<sup>3</sup> Terms of Reference | IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

# Partnership Working

Operation Hydrant continues to develop and build beneficial working arrangements with key organisations. Some examples of these are detailed below:

## Anglican Church

In 2021, liaison with the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team continued to develop with the aim of ensuring an appropriate pathway was created to bring safeguarding referrals from the Anglican Church into policing.

## Catholic Church

An effective working relationship was established with the Catholic Standards Safeguarding Agency (CSSA), a new professional standards body with regulatory powers. CSSA advises on and audits the work of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. It replaces the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) following recommendations of the independent review of the safeguarding structures and arrangements within the Catholic Church in England and Wales, along with those made by the IICSA.

CSSA worked with Operation Hydrant to reach out to all Catholic dioceses, resulting in 14 new dioceses signing up to Operation Hydrant referrals pathway. In total, 34 referrals were received in 2021.

## Home Office

Operation Hydrant continues to liaise with the Home Office Tackling Exploitation and Abuse Programme and in line with the Home Office protocol<sup>4</sup>, 13 safeguarding referrals were received in 2021.

## LimeCulture

In 2020, Operation Hydrant commissioned LimeCulture Community Interest Company (LimeCulture) to deliver a service through the implementation of a National Independent Sexual Violence Advocate Coordinator (NISVAC) for harder-to-reach groups. The NISVAC reaches out to identified harder to reach groups and seldom heard communities in order to develop pathways, build confidence and trust, and understand barriers to reporting.

The NISVAC advice line for these groups continues; the service provides potential victims of sexual abuse within harder-to-reach groups with a pathway to support services and criminal justice processes. The NISVAC will continue to engage with the groups and individuals within the groups in order to provide information and support allowing individual victims to make informed decisions.

Any cases received via this pathway will be referred to Operation Hydrant where there is an indication that child sexual abuse has been committed, or where there is an identified safeguarding risk.

The work undertaken by LimeCulture is independent of policing and falls within the objectives of the Operation Hydrant inclusion strategy.



## Maggie Oliver Foundation

The Maggie Oliver foundation (MOF) held a meeting with the Home Secretary in December 2020 during which concerns were raised with the Home Secretary relating to the way forces were allegedly conducting CSE/CSA investigations and safeguarding victims who were receiving support from their foundation. In January 2021, former Chief Constable Simon Bailey, who at the time was the National Police Chiefs Council lead for child protection and abuse investigation, provided the Home Secretary with reassurance that he would undertake to review each of these cases and where he could, address the issues that had been raised. Operation Hydrant were tasked by Chief Constable Bailey to undertake this process. In 2021, a total of 33 referrals were received and passed to senior managers within relevant forces for review; to ensure any safeguarding or investigative issues were addressed.

## National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)

Engagement with NAPAC continued positively throughout this period. Due to the confidential nature of NAPAC's support services for the adult victims and survivors who contact them, it is not possible for Operation Hydrant to have the traditional safeguarding referral pathway with NAPAC. That notwithstanding, NAPAC sought and received advice from Operation Hydrant on a number of general cases and issues of concern.



NAPAC is the only UK organisation to offer support to adult survivors of any gender and of all types of childhood abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. NAPAC have supported a number of live investigations with independent victim advocate advice. They also contribute (where appropriate) to Operation Hydrant's continuous professional development inputs to officers working on CSA cases, to share insight on a trauma informed approach and ensure the presence of the victim's voice is captured.

## Sea Cadets

Engagement with the Sea Cadets continued throughout 2021, despite referrals diminishing due to their past case review closing in 2020. In total, 31 referrals were received via this pathway in 2021.

## Sports

Operation Hydrant continues to engage with national sporting bodies to support them with improved information processes and a referral pathway within national policing. In 2021, 17 new sports governing bodies signed up to the pathway, with 18 referrals received.

<sup>4</sup> Home Office Protocol version 3.0

## Impact - Safeguarding Referrals

The following had potential to impact on the number of referrals received by police and other agencies:

**Covid19** – the pandemic continued to have an impact on victim reflection. It was recognised that potentially victims of non-recent child sexual abuse suffered from added anxiety, isolation and stress resulting from the measures falling out of the pandemic, resulting in triggers resurfacing that might have been previously manageable. It is likely that Covid19 continued to be a contributory factor to those victims who have had time to reflect, particularly during periods of isolation.

## IICSA - Truth Project

Awareness campaigns continued to encourage victims of child sexual abuse to speak out before the project closed on 31 October 2021.

## Everyone's Invited

The launch of the website created a safe place for victims to share their stories (testimonies). Its mission was to 'expose and eradicate rape culture with empathy, compassion and understanding'<sup>5</sup>. The reporting focussed on abuse within educational settings.

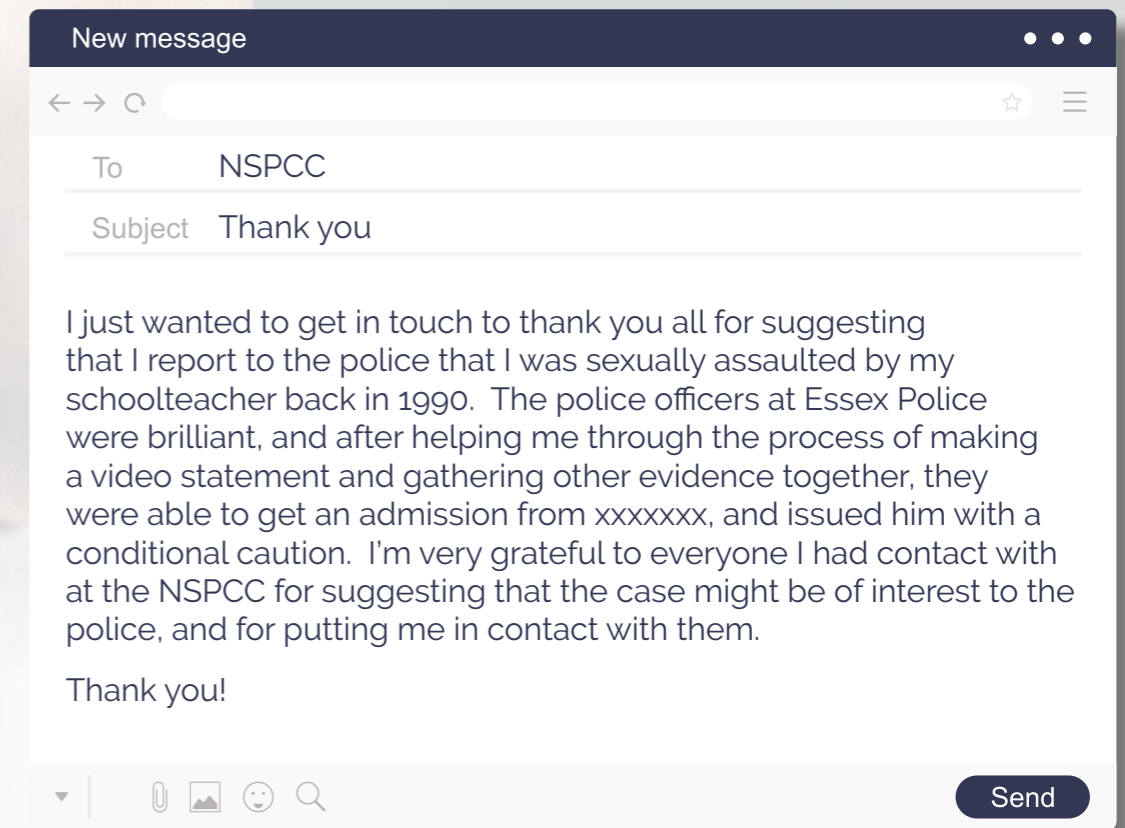
The movement received national and international press coverage and triggered an extensive amount of social media engagement. This resulted in the launch of a dedicated NSPCC helpline - 'Report Abuse in Education' on 1 April 2021 which was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE). The bespoke helpline offers support to:

- + Children/young people making current and non-recent disclosures of sexual abuse/harassment and incidents linked to school in any capacity
- + Adults who have experienced non-recent abuse
- + Parents/carers with concerns about their own/other children
- + Children/young people involved or witnessing incidents
- + Professionals working in schools requiring support

Referrers are signposted to other relevant support services available, including NSPCC Childline.

As part of Operation Hydrant's remit, an additional safeguarding referral pathway into national policing was agreed. In total, 113 referrals were received via the helpline in 2021.

## Thanks for support received following contact with the NSPCC helpline



<sup>5</sup> www.everyonesinvited.uk/about

## TV and film storylines

External triggers also include TV and film storylines depicting child sexual abuse. Following some broadcasts, Operation Hydrant saw an impact via increased referrals from non-policing organisations. In 2021, such storylines were portrayed in the following:

**West Side Story film 2021**

**TV Soaps - Emmerdale/Hollyoaks/Holby City**

**BBC's Football's Darkest Secret**

**Channel 4's 24hrs in Police Custody**

**Channel 4's Let's Talk – Child Sexual Abuse**

**Netflix – Procession**

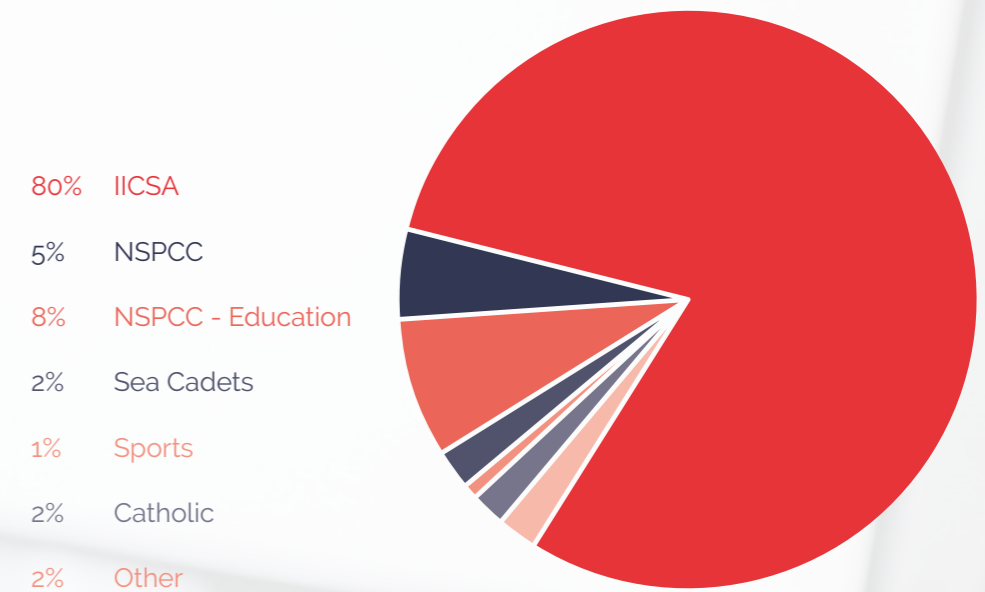
**Netflix - Maid**

**BBC Three – Charlie Webster, Nowhere to Run:  
Abused by our Coach**

Other external triggers included reported investigations relating to non-recent child sexual abuse both in national and local news together with the continued national publicity around the Ghislaine Maxwell/Jeffrey Epstein case. There is a correlation between these factors and victims coming forward to report non-recent child sexual abuse.

## Referral Trends

In 2021, Operation Hydrant received 1409 new referrals. The below chart shows the numbers of referrals by source for 2021:



## IICSA Referral Outcomes Overview

Throughout 2021 Operation Hydrant continued to obtain, record and review outcomes from the IICSA which were prioritised to coincide with the IICSA's final report to be published in 2022. The IICSA is provided with monthly updates of outcomes relating to referrals. At the end of 2021, a total of 14,147 referrals had been recorded which required an outcome. The chart shows the cumulative outcomes of referrals originating from the IICSA.

Ongoing IICSA Outcomes - Data for completed outcomes 2021 (Month end figures)  
(Totals relate to rows of data and NOT individual referrals/cases - e.g. a single referral may create multiple rows of data)

January	12167
February	12455
March	12706
April	12871
May	12964
June	13143
July	13362
August	13496
September	13642
October	13843
November	13990
December	14147

# Professional Standards

The Operation Hydrant Integrity Strategy applies to any case that is referred to us if there is a professional standards element to it. The team assesses reports referred to Operation Hydrant from a variety of agencies contacted by victims of child sexual abuse who have expressed dissatisfaction with police, or alleged criminality or wrongdoing by a police employee.

The strategy sets out the criteria that the expressions of dissatisfaction must meet for consideration by the referrals team. Specifically, the victim or person reporting child abuse must allege either:

- + **The police failed to carry out an adequate investigation of the reported child sexual abuse.**
- + **The police deliberately refused to investigate the child sexual abuse, e.g., a 'cover-up'.**
- + **The alleged perpetrator of the child sexual abuse was a police employee.**

Any reports assessed as meeting the Integrity Strategy criteria are progressed to the relevant Professional Standards Department (PSD) of the force concerned. There is a requirement for the PSD to assess the dissatisfaction/statement of wrongdoing and decide whether a complaint or conduct case is recorded in accordance with national guidance.

In addition to the above referrals, the Operation Hydrant referrals team will make enquiries of PSDs related to information received from monthly force returns or matters identified in the news media.

In 2021, a total of 31 referrals were received into Operation Hydrant and disseminated to 21 forces.



# The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA)

Operation Hydrant acts as the interface between the IICSA and policing in England and Wales. Requests from the Public Inquiry are relayed to the relevant police forces across the UK, and responses from police forces to inform the IICSA's work strands are supported through Operation Hydrant. Whilst the Inquiry continued its work throughout 2021 the impact on Operation Hydrant and national policing was somewhat reduced as no investigation hearings took place due to the hearings timetable being completed.

## Demand and Activity

The Inquiry finalised its investigation hearing strands in 2020 following a total of 325 days of hearings and 725 witnesses. In 2021, the Inquiry concentrated its efforts on the release of a number of further investigation hearing and research reports and preparation for publication of the final report.

2021 was a busy period for Operation Hydrant in relation to the Inquiry's work. The team continued to review reports and research documents and supported the Inquiry with ongoing requests from national policing in preparation for the final report.

To date, in total around 200,000 separate documents comprising over two million pages of police documentation have been provided to the Inquiry's various work strands via their database.

Operation Hydrant continued to review and catalogue evidence and material provided to the Inquiry in order to:

- + **Ensure all emerging issues or themes for policing were accurately captured.**
- + **Continue to identify where there was potential for criticism of national policing.**
- + **Identify recommendations likely to impact upon policing.**

The Inquiry's published reports continued to attract national news media coverage and generate significant public interest. As part of this, policing will remain in the spotlight, and Operation Hydrant will maintain liaison with impacted forces to ensure that policing nationally is represented consistently across a range of complex issues.

## Investigation reports published in 2021

In 2021 the IICSA published three investigation hearing reports:

- + **July – Children in the care of Lambeth Council**
- + **September – Child protection in religious organisations and settings**
- + **October – Institutional responses to allegations of child sexual abuse involving the late Lord Janner of Braunstone QC**

## Research Project published in 2021

Three reports were published following the Victims and Survivors' forums:

- + **February – Victims and Survivors' Forum consultation on protected characteristics: Summary report**
- + **April – Engagement with support services for ethnic minority communities**
- + **June – Engagement with children and young people**

## Research published in 2021

- + **July – Child sexual abuse in contemporary institutional contexts**

The engagement reports held no recommendations and were separate from formal evidence obtained in the Inquiry's investigations, they also sat outside of the Inquiry's research strand.

## IICSA Recommendations related to Policing

There was one recommendation for policing in 2021 arising in the Lambeth report:

**'The Metropolitan Police Service should consider whether there are grounds for a criminal investigation into Lambeth Council's actions when providing information to the coroner about the circumstances surrounding LA A2's death'.**

This is an ongoing recommendation that the Metropolitan Police Service have acknowledged and are investigating.

A full list of all IICSA recommendations with the most recent institutional updates can be found on their website at [www.iicsa.org.uk/recommendations](http://www.iicsa.org.uk/recommendations)

## Truth Project

The IICSA Truth Project work concluded in October after six years of providing a safe space for victims and survivors to share their experiences of sexual abuse and suggestions for change.

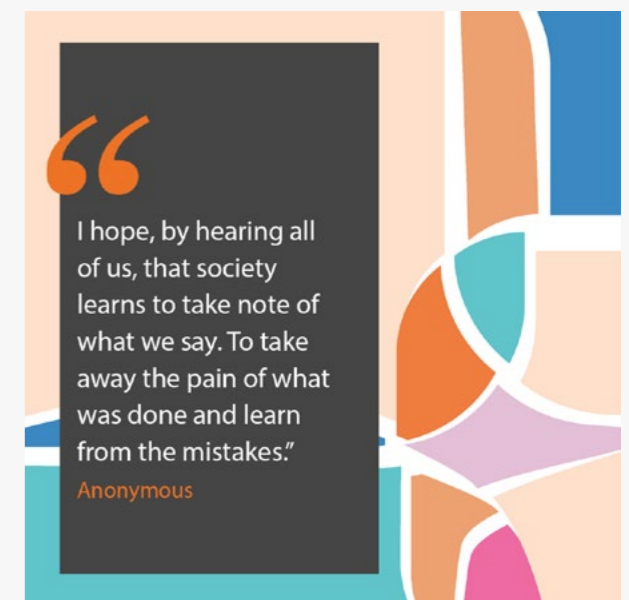
The project began as a pilot in Liverpool in November 2015, with all victims and survivors invited to share their experiences at safe locations around the country. These sessions have proven pivotal to the work and understanding of the Inquiry. In 2021, in line with the IICSA guidance relating to the ongoing pandemic, the Truth Project offered the opportunity for experiences to be shared by phone, video call or in writing.

Operation Hydrant continued to see a steady flow of referrals through the safeguarding and referrals team into national policing in 2021 but in diminishing numbers as the project concluded.

All these routes have the potential to translate into referrals to policing for safeguarding and investigative actions to be considered. Operation Hydrant will continue to work with the IICSA to ensure that at the completion of this project all referrals have been appropriately dealt with.

**At the point of its closure, more than 6000 individuals had come forward to the Truth Project to share their experiences of child sexual abuse.**

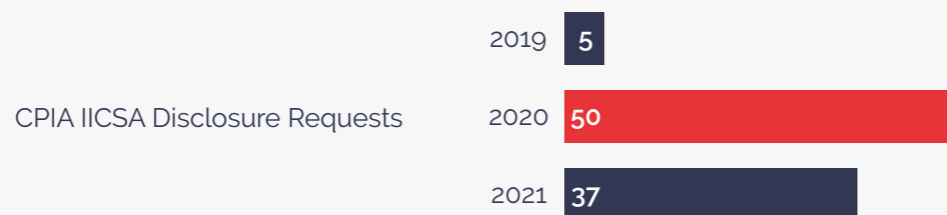
The panel will evaluate the experiences and inform the findings and recommendations in the final report.



## IICSA Criminal Proceedings and Investigation Act (CPIA) Protocol

Some victims who contact the IICSA Truth Project choose to share their experience for the first time. Operation Hydrant has a CPIA disclosure protocol in place with the IICSA, at the point that the file is ready to go to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The guidance states that disclosure should only be made through Operation Hydrant and only at the stage when an investigator believes they will be approaching the CPS for a charging decision.

Third party material disclosure applications were made for 37 investigations in 2021. The below chart shows the trends over the last 3 years:



## Future Work Streams

The remaining investigation reports, following a public hearing, are to be published in 2022:

- + **'Child sexual exploitation by organised networks' (CSEON) on 1 February**
- + **'Residential schools' on 1 March.**

The NPCC were core participants in both hearings with six senior police officers giving evidence in the CSEON strand.

Operation Hydrant will remain engaged with all affected force areas and with the NPCC to ensure that national policing is prepared. The IICSA's final report is due to be published later in 2022 and will conclude the work of the Inquiry.



## National Child Sexual Abuse Review Panel (CSARP)

The national panel reviews allegations of child sexual abuse marked no further action (NFA) by either the police or the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) before 5 June 2013. This date marks the beginning of the Victim's Right to Review scheme (VRR).

The panel is a joint CPS and NPCC project providing a route for review for victims of child sexual abuse who cannot use the VRR process due only to the age of the investigation.

The panel is made up of a Deputy Chief Constable, two Chief Crown Prosecutors, senior Rape and Serious Sexual Offence (RASSO) lawyers, experienced Senior Investigative Officers (SIO) and an independent member from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

The panel will consider any child sexual abuse case referred to them by, or on behalf of the victim. In each case, the original decision maker, (police or CPS) are offered an opportunity to review their decision, which in many cases leads to a decision to charge or re-investigate, meaning no further action is required by the panel. Where police / CPS remain convinced the NFA decision was correct, the panel secretariat recovers the file and case materials to present the case to the next panel meeting.

Any case considered by the panel faces one of three outcomes:

- + **Investigation referred to the police for further investigation and submission to CPS for a charging decision upon completion**
- + **Referred to the CPS to reconsider their original decision**
- + **The panel agrees with the original NFA decision**

## Victims and survivors referred 14 'new' cases to the CSARP in 2021, bringing the total number to 301.

This number represents a decrease in demand from the previous year; however, the figures from 2020 were inflated by a successful media campaign to raise the public profile of the panel's work. Plans are currently under consideration for more awareness raising activity in 2022.



**78% of referrals to the panel result in reinvestigation or reconsideration, and 15 % of those cases concluded with a conviction. Considering these referrals represent the most difficult of cases, all previously marked NFA this is a significant conviction rate and sentences regularly exceed 10 years imprisonment, in some instances over 20 years.**

Where referrals do not end with a criminal justice outcome, victims still benefit from their case being reinvestigated and a full explanation of why the case cannot be progressed is given (a factor often found to be lacking some older investigations).

One victim who did see a successful prosecution of their abuser in 2021 said "I am in shock, it's been a very surreal week, and I think I have felt every emotion you could, it will definitely take a while to sink in, but I feel relieved and validated..."

Four cases were heard by the panel during 2021, of which three were first referred for review in the previous year. The panel agreed with all four of the NFA decisions but ensured that the victim(s) in each case were provided with a comprehensive explanation of the decision-making process and signposted to appropriate support according to their needs.

The limited number of cases referred for the consideration of the panel and the outcome of those cases represents a clear trend towards the police and CPS undertaking a full reinvestigation in most cases without receiving any request to do so from the panel. Only the most difficult of cases, where investigators cannot find any reasonable means of progressing the matter towards a criminal justice outcome are submitted for the consideration of the panel.



## Peer Review and Peer Support (PRPS)

Operation Hydrant has a cadre of Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs) from around the UK who all have recent, relevant experience of investigating major crime falling within the child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) remit. The SIO cadre and Operation Hydrant's own 'in house' experts support investigations around the UK upon request from the lead investigator at no cost to the force.

Peer Support is an informal process, which provides the opportunity for the SIO and their team to explore topics of their choice with peers who have the benefit of recently experiencing similar issues. The process is documented for the benefit of the lead investigator and the Major Investigation Room (MIR) where applicable.

**During 2021, 14 peer review or support sessions took place for forces including Norfolk, West Mercia, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Humberside, West Midlands, and the Metropolitan Police. This number also includes a thematic review of a domestic violence investigation in Bedfordshire and supporting the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) with a thematic review of child exploitation in Staffordshire.**

Despite the travel restrictions placed upon us because of Covid19, Operation Hydrant staff and cadre members deployed to force where it was appropriate and where risk could be mitigated. On some occasions support was provided using remote conferencing facilities as the safest and most appropriate method of delivery. During the year the team delivered 181 recommendations, bringing the total since the service was first introduced to almost 700.

Feedback from forces is consistently positive, a fact which is evidenced by the continual rise in demand for this kind of support. In response to this demand, the PSPR offer has widened its remit to cover all aspects of the child protection and abuse investigation portfolio – this includes (but may not be limited to) all aspects of child abuse (physical, sexual, neglect, emotional and any other child safeguarding risk matters that may be raised. Plans are in place to increase resourcing during 2022 and beyond.

**"The Operation Hydrant cadre of experts have carried out both an initial and follow-up peer support session for Operation Lydstep. The sessions, final report and recommendations have proved to be invaluable with regards to progressing elements of the investigation in areas not otherwise considered".**

**(West Mercia Police)**



# Continued Professional Development (CPD)

The learning and best practice captured via the PRPS process is shared via subsequent deployments and regular support provided daily during regular, more informal communication with SIOs. This process is further enhanced by the provision of a library of advice documents, and the delivery of free CPD learning events.

The Operation Hydrant library of documents continues to increase, and in addition to the general SIO advice first published in 2016, it now includes resources focussing on key strategies and topical issues of national interest. In 2021 a document aimed at the investigation of child sexual exploitation, (CSE) was published with the support of the NPCC. Everything is made available to national policing on the police online information-sharing platform Knowledge Hub, or via a direct request to Operation Hydrant.

The CPD events consist of an interactive case study of either CSA or CSE, aimed at generating discussion and highlighting repeated issues and best practice nationally. During 2021, Operation Hydrant delivered 12 events to 10 force areas and 183 delegates. Feedback from the events remains positive, with 96% of delegates rating the input as useful or very useful.

**“I have thoroughly enjoyed today's input. It has been extremely informative and well received by all our team”**

**“Excellent input, I have learnt so much today. Very well presented and enjoyable day. Thank you”**



# Communications

The Operation Hydrant communications team comprises of two roles – a Strategic Communications Coordinator and a Communications Officer, who provide strategic and tactical communications supporting the delivery of the Operation Hydrant Strategic Objectives.

During 2021, the communications team continued to design and deliver communications for this purpose, to a wide range of audiences both internal and external, working proactively to planned milestones and objectives, but with the ability to flex and react to emerging operational requirements.

## The Vulnerability Communications Hub

During 2020 Operation Hydrant provided communications support to the Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) Programme and, at the end of the year the Vulnerability and Knowledge Practice Programme (VKPP) requested similar support. The decision was made to create a Vulnerability Communications Hub supporting all three programmes.



Recruitment for the Hub resulted in two Communications Officers joining the team in July 2021 with the Strategic Communications Coordinator overseeing work across the three national work streams.

The programmes share many of the same audiences with overlap where key messaging and overarching strategic aims are concerned. Bringing the communications function together via the hub has ensured resilience and a coordinated approach, reduced duplication, generated efficiencies, and designed-in a more holistic approach, which is hugely beneficial from a national perspective.

## Demand and activity

**Internal** – 29% of enquiries upon the communications team originate from the internal audience. Through 2021, the expertise of the communications team was drawn upon formally within the Peer Review and Peer Support function; with attendance on Gold Groups for complex or highly critical incidents within a force; and informally by communications teams across UK forces seeking critical friend advice around developing or delivering communications strategies and activities for local investigations.

**Environmental scanning** – The environmental scanning function has been more vital than ever over the last 12 months, with policing placed front and centre in the highly emotive vulnerability narrative. The weekly environmental scanning document is produced by the Operation Hydrant communications team and is sent to over 400 stakeholders and partners from across the sector.

### Local & Regional Media - 2021

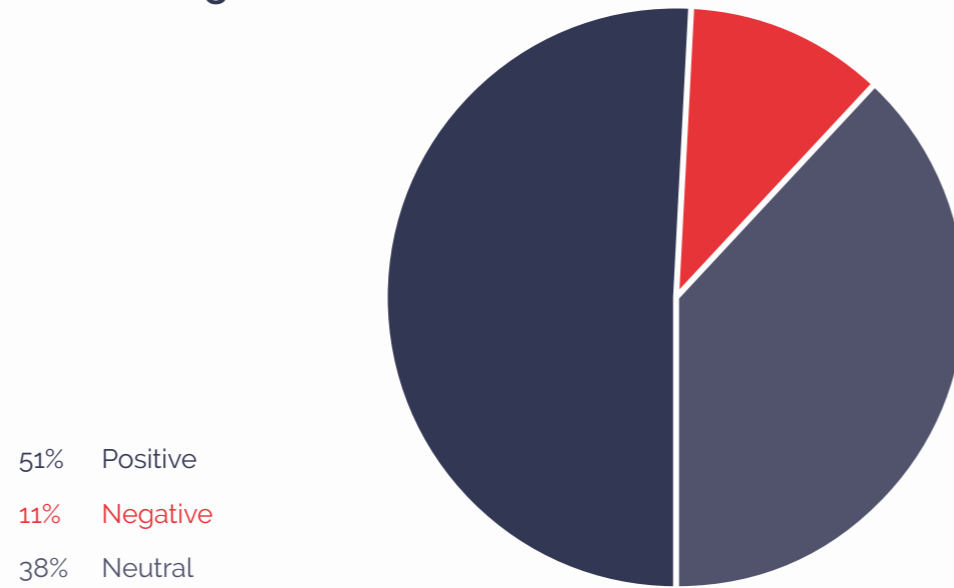


Chart showing local and regional media sentiment recorded via environmental scanning

### National Media - 2021

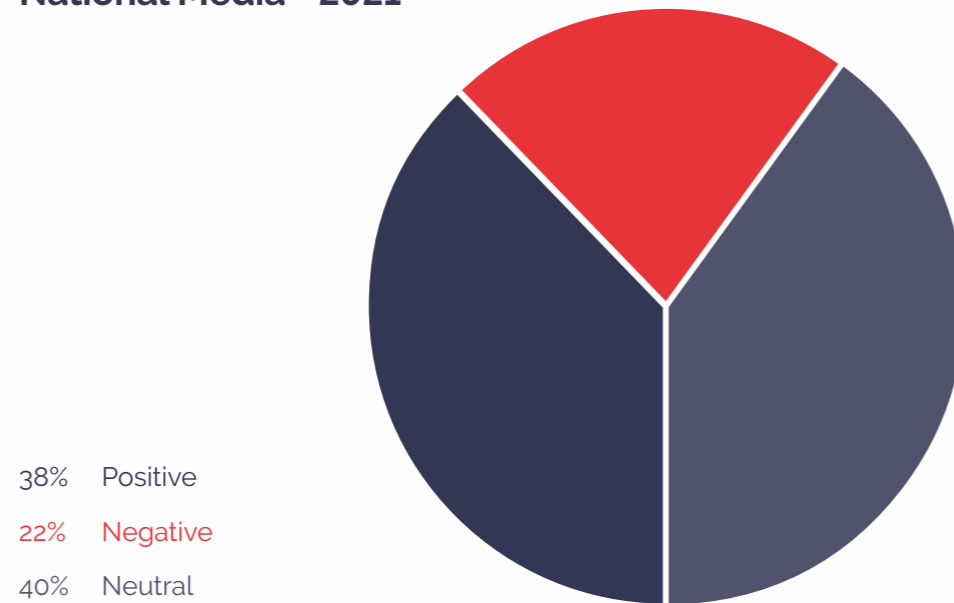


Chart showing national media sentiment recorded via environmental scanning

**"I know I've said it before, but these weekly updates are incredibly helpful. Thanks to you and all involved for producing them." Gabrielle Shaw, Chief Executive, NAPAC**

**Knowledge Hub** – During 2021 the membership of the Operation Hydrant Knowledge Hub group has grown by 11% to 40 members, however, there has been less engagement from members. The impact of the pandemic has diverted policing focus elsewhere and there have been challenges in encouraging members to contribute to the group with a significant barrier being the perceived difficulty in accessing the group – two factor authentication has to be in place because the group is classified as official sensitive. However, this adds a layer that many find difficult and therefore prefer not to access the resources the group holds. In 2022, effort will be put into promoting the benefits of the group, but alternative platforms offered by new technology will also be explored.



**Stakeholders** - form more than a quarter (27%) of Operation Hydrant communications enquiries and activity. These include key partners, third sector organisations supporting and advocating for victims, and communications, safeguarding, and strategic leads across a range of organisations impacted or able to impact on the work of Operation Hydrant, such as sporting bodies. The impact of the pandemic removed the opportunity for key stakeholders to have an annual in-person briefing with the NPCC lead; however, briefings now take place using video conferencing facilities. A regular bulletin update is also circulated which ensures that all stakeholders are kept informed of relevant issues.

### Proactive Communications

The communications team delivered a range of pro-active work streams during 2021, including:

#### Public Inquiry Training

The Operation Hydrant communications team has a well-developed understanding of the public inquiry process and the impact it can have on an organisation. In 2021 the team worked with a number of police force communications teams providing training for teams who were preparing for involvement in a public inquiry. More sessions are planned for 2022.



## Police Communications Course

Operation Hydrant regularly contributes to a national course designed for communications professionals who have been recently appointed into police communicator roles. This is an excellent opportunity to raise the profile of the support Operation Hydrant can provide to local forces and transfer knowledge, learning and good practice to police comms teams as part of a continuous process of enablement.

## Future Structures Planning

Between July and September 2021, the communications team coordinated a process of consultation and review to determine the value and impact of the functions currently delivered by Operation Hydrant, measure demand across its business functions, and identify potential gaps to inform forward planning. Consultation took place via a series of surveys to all audiences internal to policing, partners, and key stakeholders. This was followed by a series of focus groups to add further qualitative data to the survey findings, with the outcomes from all of this activity informing the future structures recommendations.

The communications element of the restructure work is significant. At the beginning of 2022 a future structures communications strategy will be produced which will encompass several strands of work all requiring their own plan. It is essential that internal (policing) and external (stakeholders and partners) audiences understand the changes ahead, the key change being that Operation Hydrant will no longer work to the criteria that have been in place since 2014.

## Predictions for 2022

As 2021 concluded the Operation Hydrant communications team was well embedded and working holistically across national policing through the Vulnerability Communications Hub. However, there are still challenges to overcome, with IT infrastructure in particular continuing to be a barrier to the hub becoming truly collaborative in their way of working, but progress is being made.

Significant demand will be created by the restructure of Operation Hydrant which will begin early in 2022 with the expectation that the new structure will be in place and delivering to a new set of strategic objectives by July 2022. The communications team will keep Operation Hydrant's key partners and stakeholders informed of changes, new work streams and the structure of the team as the next part of Operation Hydrant's journey begins. This will be against a backdrop of continuing to deliver core functions and as we move towards the conclusion of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. As we prepare for the work of the Inquiry to reach an end, it is important that we are fully prepared for what is sure to be a report that will have significant implications for policing at both a local and national level.



# The future structure of Operation Hydrant

## Background and context

Operation Hydrant was initially established primarily to provide operational coordination around the surge in victim and survivor reporting which followed the death of Jimmy Savile and in respect of allegations made against other people in positions of prominence or trust. However, since its inception, Operation Hydrant has adapted, responding dynamically to provide coordination for policing across a range of matters relating to child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, and the spectrum of wider vulnerability.

This has resulted in a structure which is being called upon to deliver a wide range of outcomes for policing and key partners and stakeholders, which fall outside its original purpose and scope.

In addition to this, the operating context has moved on. Key variables in this context include:

- + **The conclusion of the work of the IICSA in late 2022. This will remove the requirement for Operation Hydrant to act as the interface between the work of the Inquiry and policing.**
- + **A shift in focus on the type of suspects subject to non-recent allegations. People of Public Prominence now form less than 3% of all recorded allegations, and within this category, the suspects are not generally household names or high-profile individuals likely to attract intense and prolonged media and public scrutiny and interest. In 2014, allegations and speculation regarding abuse by high profile individuals dominated the public narrative, today this is no longer the case.**
- + **Large and complex investigations spanning multiple forces are now rare, removing the requirement for Operation Hydrant to coordinate the policing response, and secure primacy. Processes in place today provide adequately for primacy to be achieved without the requirement for national coordination.**
- + **Developments in technology have removed the requirement for Operation Hydrant to provide an operational coordination and deconfliction function. This includes advancements in PND.**

## Restructure work in 2021

In 2021 Operation Hydrant undertook a process of consultation and review to determine the value and impact of the functions currently delivered, measure demand across its business functions, and identify potential gaps to inform forward planning. Consultation took place via a series of surveys to all audiences internal to policing, partners, and key stakeholders. This was followed by a series of focus groups to add further qualitative data to the survey findings.

The review concluded that Operation Hydrant provided a range of functions to national policing, which it was important to continue delivering, and for which there was continued or expanding demand. These included:

- + **The coordination function in respect of national or critical issues which overarch local investigations and national policing portfolios.**
- + **The capacity to provide a national strategic analytical function.**
- + **Acting as a centre of expertise on child sexual abuse and exploitation, capturing learning and disseminating good practice and producing resources for policing, undertaking the critical friend function both informally and formally.**
- + **Proactively engaging with partners and stakeholders to build and develop pathways between policing and other organisations,**
- + **The Peer Review and Peer Support function.**
- + **Ensuring that those key stakeholders are informed on the policing approach and have the opportunity to dialogue around shared issues relating to vulnerability.**

The review also concluded that the current requirement of national policing from Operation Hydrant was for an operating model which delivered the functions identified above, but which did so beyond the current narrow criteria focused on non-recent child sexual abuse by people of prominence or within an institutional setting. In practice, Operation Hydrant has been delivering within this wider arena for some time already. This "wider offer" will therefore encompass child sexual abuse and exploitation, and not just non-recent child sexual abuse within the established Operation Hydrant criteria.

These functions are captured within a revised set of strategic objectives for Operation Hydrant.

The review also recommended that other functions, which no longer add value or have been superseded, would be withdrawn. These include the maintenance of a HOLMES database for the purposes of operational coordination and deconfliction and its supporting functions. Operation Hydrant's role as the interface to the Independent IICSA would naturally conclude following publication of the final report later in 2022, and the conclusion of the statutory period which follows it.

As a result of the revised structures and functions proposed for delivery by Operation Hydrant, the staff within the Operation Hydrant team entered a period of collective consultation during December 2021 into January 2022.

## Plans for 2022

In 2022 some business functions experiencing high demand will evolve towards the new structures at the earliest opportunity. The full new structures will be in place from 1 August 2022 and embedding through the latter part of 2022.

## Terms of Reference

In line with Operation Hydrant's new way of working, new terms of reference have been agreed to ensure clarity of strategic focus for Operation Hydrant staff, our internal policing audience and stakeholders and partners. The terms of reference are:

- + **Improve the police service response to the safeguarding of children and investigation of child sexual abuse.**
- + **Provide a review capability that meets the needs of senior police leaders and investigators.**
- + **Increase victim, survivor, and public confidence in the police approach.**
- + **Maintain effective liaison with strategic partners and key stakeholders.**
- + **Develop best practice advice and be a hub for specialist knowledge and expertise.**
- + **Coordinate the receipt of safeguarding referrals and reports of crime on behalf of police forces in the UK where this adds value.**
- + **Collaborate with other policing programs to enhance the support to forces, partners, and stakeholders within the area of vulnerability.**
- + **Provide a national analysis capability for child sexual abuse and collaborate with other partners to develop a wider understanding.**

Moving into 2022 Operation Hydrant will enter a period of transition with the aim of the new structure being in place and operating from 1 August 2022. Plans are in place to ensure all key audiences are kept informed of changes and understand the new remit Operation Hydrant will be working to.



## Conclusion

Operation Hydrant was initially established primarily to provide operational coordination around the surge in victim and survivor reporting which followed the death of Jimmy Savile and allegations relating to other people in positions of prominence or trust. But, over time, Operation Hydrant has adapted, responding dynamically to provide coordination for policing across a range of matters relating to child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, and the spectrum of wider vulnerability.

The demand for some areas of support offered by Operation Hydrant has increased significantly, particularly around the provision of learning and expertise, the Peer Review and Peer Support function, and Research and Analysis.

As we look towards 2022, front and centre of our planning is the conclusion of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. The final report is due towards the end of the summer followed by a 3-month period to allow for any judicial review.

During 2022 Operation Hydrant will focus on expanding and developing collaborative working – both with our partners and stakeholders, but also holistically across national policing. For example, we have already established a communications hub supporting a range of NPCC portfolios working within the field of CSAE and wider vulnerability, and alongside this we are continuing to enhance and develop collaborative working with our sister programme the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme in several business areas, including peer review and peer support and analytics and research. This will be coupled with further investment in developing partnership pathways and engagement.

The last 12 months have certainly been challenging at times as Covid19 continued to impact the Operation Hydrant team both personally and professionally. There have also been positives with the situation so many found themselves in expediting innovation to ensure service delivery did not suffer. The Outside Enquiry Team were able to remotely access several force's systems allowing them to continue the support they provide efficiently, and stakeholder and partner engagement has continued remotely.

**The thread that runs through all that Operation Hydrant does is to support national policing to deliver the vital services it does to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. This is something that will continue to be at the centre of all the work the team carries out.**

As we enter 2022, the focus for Operation Hydrant will be to embed the new way of working, aiming for the new structure to be fully in place and operational from 1 August 2022. The team will welcome new members, and existing members of staff will embrace new roles. The next 12 months will be exciting for Operation Hydrant, and we look forward to undertaking this journey alongside policing colleagues, key partners, and stakeholders.

## Appendix

### 1) Operation Hydrant criteria (this will change from 1 August 2022)

All child sexual abuse investigations that match the following:

The report **MUST BE:**

**Non-Recent** – Non-recent within Operation Hydrant refers to a crime against a child under the age of 18 and reported at least one year after the offence took place.

Where the abuse has occurred over a number of years and a number of offences meet the non-recent criteria, but other offences fall outside (i.e., reported within one year of being committed), then all allegations should be included.

The report **MUST INVOLVE THE FOLLOWING:**

**Location being at or involving an institution or organisation** – An institution or organisation includes Parliament, schools, councils, hospitals, prisons, churches, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, Guides, Sea Cadets, children's homes, community centres, leisure centres, youth clubs (please contact Operation Hydrant if in doubt).

Additionally, this includes peer on peer criteria offences in such institutions or organisations.

**AND / OR**

**INVOLVE A Person(s) of Public Prominence** – Persons with celebrity or high-profile status, elected officials either locally or nationally, persons of significant national or local prominence or otherwise in the public eye and likely to attract media attention. (Includes their associates).

FINALLY, the report **MUST BE:**

**A Live Investigation** – An active investigation of a crimed allegation that was live at any point In August 2014 onwards until such point the investigation has been finalised. (Please see expanded guidance for examples).

As a guide, Operation Hydrant 'Non-Criteria' offences include – familial abuse, indecent images, voyeurism, physical abuse, internet abuse and grooming.



# OPERATION HYDRANT

Coordinating the response  
to non recent sexual abuse

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