Ethics and Transparency Panel

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Date:	11th August 2026
Subject:	Leicestershire Police Response to Baroness Casey's National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

1. Executive Summary

On 16 June 2025, Baroness Casey published the National Audit on Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The Government accepted all 12 recommendations and subsequently published its formal response. The recommendations seek to improve the identification, investigation and prosecution of perpetrators whilst strengthening the protection afforded to children and improving transparency.

Leicestershire Police supports the recommendations and has worked closely with national policing partners, including the National Crime Agency (NCA), the NPCC Child Protection Portfolio, the Hydrant Programme and regional safeguarding partnerships to strengthen the response to child sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Force considers child sexual exploitation, group-based offending and the safeguarding of vulnerable children to be a critical priority within its vulnerability, child protection and serious organised crime response.

2. Recommendation 2: Reopening Investigations and Pursuing New Lines of Enquiry

National Position

Recommendation 2 required law enforcement agencies to identify and review previously closed investigations into group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse and pursue further investigative opportunities where appropriate.

In response, Government established Operation Beaconport, a nationally coordinated policing operation overseen by the National Crime Agency and supported through significant additional funding.

The operation seeks to:

- Review previously closed cases.
- Identify missed lines of enquiry.
- Build investigative capability.
- Apply trauma-informed approaches.
- Increase prosecutions and offender disruption activity

Leicestershire Police Response:

Leicestershire Police fully complied with the national Operation Beaconport requirements.
The Force identified all cases meeting the national criteria for review under the first tranche of Operation Beaconport and submitted them for assessment.

We also successfully applied for additional funding from the national team and used this to increase capability of our staff through additional specialist training.

The Force identified 22 qualifying investigations for review and submitted these to the national programme. Following initial assessment, 11 full case files were requested for detailed review.
No cases were returned to Leicestershire Police for additional activity or investigation

3**. Information sharing with the NCA and action taken:**

The Force submitted cases that met the nationally defined Beaconport criteria relating to group-based child sexual exploitation investigations where suspects had previously received no further action decisions.

Relevant case information and associated evidential material were then provided where requested under the national review process.

The force has identified 628 cases meeting the Operation Beaconport second Tranche criteria.
Of these cases the force has been proactive to identify a finite list of potential cases requiring further investigation pending the review of Op Beaconport.
At this time no investigation has been reopened.

Operationally sensitive information, victim-identifying information and intelligence relating to live or potential investigations cannot be disclosed publicly.
However, the Force can provide assurance that:

- All qualifying cases were reviewed in accordance with national requirements.
- Requests for additional material were complied with.
- The Force continues to assess any recommendations arising from national review activity.
- Opportunities for further investigation are actively pursued where evidential or intelligence-led opportunities exist.

4: Recommendation 4: Improving Data, Intelligence & Understanding of Group-Based CSEA

National Position
Baroness Casey highlighted longstanding weaknesses in the national understanding of the scale, nature and characteristics of group-based child sexual exploitation. The recommendation focused upon strengthening data collection, intelligence development and transparency.

Nationally, the Hydrant Programme and Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce have developed analysis intended to better understand patterns of offending and support investigations.

Leicestershire Police Response
The Force has well-established arrangements for identifying and managing exploitation risks through:

- Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Tactical exploitation meetings.
- Child exploitation governance processes.
- Strategic Partnerships Board oversight.
- Exploitation plans focused on both victims and perpetrators.
- Development of a Child Problem Profile which encompasses the impact of exploitation

The Force has also continued to develop intelligence-led approaches which are designed to identify exploitation risk, locate offenders and improve safeguarding interventions.
Robust information-sharing arrangements operate across policing, local authority and partner agencies.

5. Response to Panel Question Regarding Leicester

The Panel has specifically referenced Leicester being included within a list of local authority areas where grooming gang offending has been identified historically.

Leicestershire Police recognises that child sexual exploitation and group-based abuse have occurred both locally and nationally.
The Force does not seek to minimise that risk and remains committed to identifying perpetrators, protecting victims and pursuing offenders through the criminal justice system.

The Force cannot publicly disclose operational intelligence, offender profiles, ongoing investigations or sensitive intelligence products. However, assurance can be provided that:

- Child sexual exploitation remains a policing priority.
- Intelligence relating to exploitation is actively developed.
- Multi-agency arrangements support identification of vulnerable children.
- Perpetrator disruption activity is embedded within safeguarding plans.
- Exploitation is monitored through strategic governance arrangements and performance oversight.

Stopping those who sexually exploit children remains a priority for Leicestershire Police and partner agencies.

6**: Recommendation 5 Strengthening Investigative Capability and Specialist Response**

National Position
The Casey Review identified the need to strengthen the capability of policing and partner agencies to investigate complex group-based exploitation and abuse.
National activity has focused upon:

- Developing specialist investigative capability.
- Improving understanding of group-based offending.
- Enhancing training and support available to investigators.
- Making greater use of specialist support provided through the Hydrant Programme and national teams.

Leicestershire Police Response
Leicestershire Police has invested significantly in specialist safeguarding and public protection functions.
Current arrangements include:

- Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Teams.
- Specialist accredited investigators.
- Dedicated safeguarding governance.
- Continuous exploitation auditing activity.
- Multi-agency exploitation planning processes.
- Use of training provided by Op Hydrant to specialist and frontline officers
- Undergoing recruitment of investigators to support cases returned to force by Op Beaconport

The Force continues to review its investigative capability to ensure that victims receive an effective response and perpetrators are brought to justice.

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7. Recommendation 7 Improving Safeguarding and Multi-Agency Protection

National Position
Baroness Casey highlighted the need for stronger coordination across statutory agencies involved in child protection and safeguarding.

Leicestershire Police Response
The Force has mature safeguarding structures operating jointly with local authority, education and health partners.
Evidence of this includes:

- Multi-agency exploitation plans.
- Adolescent Safety and Diversion Board oversight.
- Strategic Partnerships Board governance.
- Regular child protection strategy discussions.
- Joint safeguarding processes designed to identify and protect vulnerable children.
- Active engagement in the Families first programme and instigation of Multi-agency Child Protection Teams
- Daily Multi-agency Risk Management Meeting to discuss Exploitation risk and response
- Briefing for directors of children social care and wider partners across LLR
- Engagement with OPCC in relation to commissioned victim services to ensure capacity and capability

Recent force-wide audits have continued to examine safeguarding effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement. These findings are tracked through governance arrangements to ensure learning is implemented.

8**. Recommendation 8 Improving Accountability, Performance and Transparency**

National Position
The Casey Review emphasised the need for greater transparency and stronger recording, auditing and oversight arrangements so that agencies can better understand the effectiveness of their response to exploitation.

Leicestershire Police Response
The Force has strengthened governance and oversight through:

- Strategic monitoring of exploitation-related activity.
- Child protection audits.
- Performance review processes.
- Multi-agency governance structures.
- Regular scrutiny through senior leadership forums.

The Force also continues to support national learning and inspection activity undertaken by HMICFRS and the NPCC.

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9. **Additional Assurance and Proactive Work Undertaken by Leicestershire Police**

Whilst not forming a specific recommendation within Baroness Casey's audit, the Government's decision to establish the Independent Inquiry into Grooming Gangs forms a significant element of the wider national response to the concerns identified regarding transparency, accountability and the understanding of group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse.

In support of both Op Beaconport and the forthcoming Inquiry, Leicestershire Police has implemented a programme of information preservation and retention activity designed to identify, secure and retain material that may be relevant to future review or inquiry requirements. This includes engagement with national policing leads, records management specialists and dedicated Operation Beaconport briefing events to ensure local arrangements remain aligned with emerging national expectations.

The Force has adopted a precautionary approach to information management, including the identification of wider data sets, records and associated material that may fall within the scope of national review activity. Appropriate measures have been introduced to reduce the risk of inadvertent deletion or disposal of potentially relevant material whilst national requirements continue to develop.

Leicestershire Police has actively engaged within Op Beaconport governance, briefing events and learning forums established by the NCA Hydrant Programme and NPCC Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce. This includes participation in national SPOC briefings, delivery group activity, funding and performance reporting arrangements, and the sharing of learning intended to support consistent implementation of Op Beaconport across policing

Furthermore, the Force would wish to highlight the following activity beyond the specific recommendations:

1. Active Participation in National Programmes
Leicestershire Police actively supports:

- Operation Beaconport.
- The Hydrant Programme.
- National Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce activity.
- NPCC-led improvement programmes.

2. Exploitation Governance

The Force operates established governance structures overseeing:

- Child sexual exploitation.
- Child criminal exploitation.
- Missing children.
- Serious organised exploitation threats.

3. Intelligence and Perpetrator Focus

The Force continues to prioritise:

- Identification of perpetrators.
- Proactive intelligence development.
- Safeguarding vulnerable children.
- Disruption of organised offenders.

4. Continuous Audit and Improvement

Routine audits and reviews continue to evaluate:

- Identification of exploitation risk.
- Victim safeguarding.
- Child-centred practice.
- Investigative quality.

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10. Conclusion

Leicestershire Police fully supports the intent of Baroness Casey's recommendations and the Government's response. The Force has actively engaged with national review activity, including Operation Beaconport, and remains committed to identifying offenders, protecting victims and improving the response to group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Force can provide assurance that tackling child sexual exploitation, including organised and group-based offending, remains a significant operational and safeguarding priority.

Through partnership working, intelligence development, specialist investigation and continuous scrutiny, Leicestershire Police seeks to ensure that children and young people are protected and that those responsible for abuse are identified and brought to justice.

Please note that this report has been written with support from co-pilot, in line with force policy and guidance