

TACKLING ORGANISED

EXPLOITATION

PROGRAMME

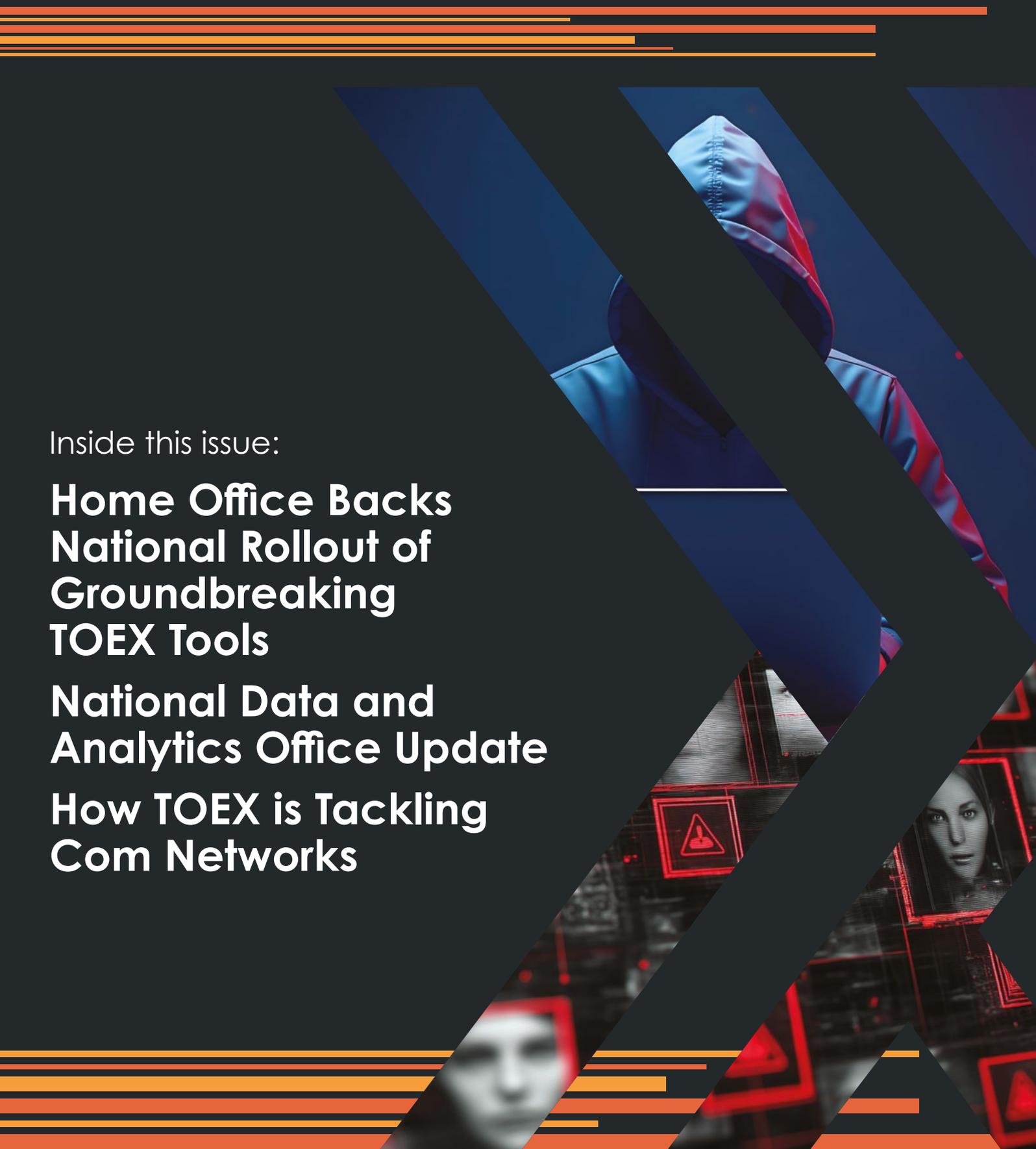
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National Rollout of
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Strategic Update



When TOEX was considered as a concept in 2019, the focus was on adding more cohesion to the way in which the service recognises, understands, and responds to organised exploitation. Six years on, the expertise brought to bear within the team and the learning gained from collaboration with policing partners has embedded an effective intelligence and analytics service within every region.

Policing rarely stands still, so this is not a finished product. The operational teams continue to listen to investigators and tailor the response, including the review of closure reports and feedback surveys to ensure the operational product meets the needs of these priority cases. To date, all the 166 investigators surveyed would recommend TOEX services to a colleague. That's a number to be proud of!

This edition shifts the spotlight onto the South-West region, who have included insights into their work. I was proud to present alongside them at a recent Ministerial visit to TOEX confirming additional

governmental funds in support the expansion to our technical tools. Jess Phillips MP was enthused to hear operational and innovation updates from the team, including excellent presentations by Abigail Meredith and Emma Bailey.

The visit then moved onto a technical demonstration by DCI Patrick Thompson, TOEX Technical Lead, showing how the funds will provide all forces the option for free access to all Apps. Whilst tech demos can be notoriously challenging, Pat gave a first-class display of the capabilities, including live-time visualisations of threats known to the Minister.

With ten TOEX teams, twenty-six forces and four ROCUs already using or onboarding to the environment, it really is an exciting time to be part of TOEX. I wonder what the next six years will hold?

**Detective Chief Superintendent
Kate Thacker KPM**
TOEX Programme Director

Home Office Backs National Rollout of Groundbreaking TOEX Tools

Policing across England and Wales has received a major boost in its fight against serious and organised crime, following the Home Office's announcement to fund the national rollout of the Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) Programme Capabilities Environment.

The investment means that all 43 police forces in England and Wales will now have the option to access the TOEX Capabilities Environment (CE)—a secure platform providing innovative tools designed to support complex investigations into serious crimes such as group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse.

The announcement follows the publication of the 'National Audit on Group-Based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse', authored by Baroness Louise Casey. The audit made 12 recommendations for improving the national policing response to this type of crime, and today's funding marks a key step in turning those recommendations into action.



Technology That Makes a Difference

The TOEX Capabilities Environment equips officers and staff with tools that streamline investigative processes, saving valuable time and resources for any policing investigation. By the start of September 2025, twenty-six forces in England and Wales had signed up frontline users. Some of these tools have been independently evaluated by the Home Office, and found to deliver faster results, reduce investigative delays, and free up officers to focus on frontline work and victim support.

Available tools include:

- **TOEX Translate** – machine translations of seized mobile devices, for bulk triage and intelligence development.
- **TOEX Transcribe** – converts audio and video media to transcripts, with the ability to populate victim and suspect interviews directly to a police file format.
- **TOEX Companies House Navigation Tool** - identifies and visualises network links between companies and people.
- **TOEX Wing-It** - search tool providing users with access to the previous 12 months' inbound and outbound flight data across all UK airports.
- **TOEX Map Scraper** - identifies all published data on Azure maps relating to a chosen business type across a chosen geographic area.
- **TOEX Data Analyser and Review Tool (DART)** - analyses and reviews large amounts of digital device data to swiftly identify patterns and relationships.

Additional tools will be added later this year.

These capabilities are delivered via a secure, UK-hosted cloud platform, with no need for additional software installation or force-level IT changes. The tools are currently provided free to forces thanks to in-year Home Office funding.

Supporting Victims, Strengthening Investigations

Jess Phillips, Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls, said:

“The sexual exploitation of children by grooming gangs is one of the most horrific crimes and we must punish perpetrators, provide justice for victims and survivors, and protect today’s children from harm.

“In June, this government responded to Baroness Casey’s report by announcing a national inquiry to direct targeted local reviews, alongside a new national police operation—measures that will deliver real results—and we’ve wasted no time in making these happen.

“One recommendation within the report focussed on the need to upgrade police information systems to improve investigations involving children at risk. Today’s announcement sees investment in these critical technical enablers, with the TOEX platform bringing tools directly to the frontline, in support of the timely and effective response to these threats.”

Deputy Chief Constables Becky Riggs and Dave McLaren, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) leads for Child Protection and Abuse Investigation and the National Intelligence Portfolio respectively, welcomed the announcement:

“This funding gives every force access to proven tools that make a real difference in our ability to investigate complex crimes, safeguard victims, and pursue offenders more effectively.

“The TOEX Programme is a powerful example of what we can achieve when we combine operational insight with innovative technology. The national rollout of these tools will improve outcomes for victims and deliver a more consistent, intelligence-led approach across the country.”

In addition, a spokesperson for the National Data and Analytics Office said: “TOEX is committed to ensure that its products and services form part of the long-term strategy for national technology, data, and analytical capabilities across policing. To facilitate this, they will be working with the National Data and Analytics Office (NDAO) and Police Digital Service (PDS) as part of the Digital Data and Technology (DDaT) portfolio to progress this work going forward.”

A Collaborative Step Forward

The TOEX Programme is proud to work in partnership with policing, the Home Office, wider law enforcement and industry partners, and was established to support investigations into serious and organised exploitation, particularly where data complexity presents a barrier to progress.

The rollout of the Capabilities Environment represents a significant milestone in national efforts to tackle some of the most harmful and challenging crimes affecting communities today.



How TOEX Is Helping to Tackle the Growing Threat of Harm-Focused Online Networks

In the ever-evolving digital world, law enforcement agencies are facing a new and deeply concerning challenge: the rise of so-called “Com groups”. These loosely connected online communities, often operating in hidden corners of the internet, are responsible for promoting harmful ideologies and committing serious offences, with victims and offenders predominantly under the age of 18.

While the subject matter is disturbing, it's important to focus on how agencies like the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) Programme are working to understand, disrupt, and dismantle these dangerous networks — providing protection to vulnerable individuals and reassurance to communities.

Understanding the Threat

The term “Com group”, also often referred to as “Com network” refers to a broad online subculture that has gained momentum since 2020. These groups are characterised by their promotion of violent, misogynistic, and nihilistic content, often glorifying physical and sexual harm, particularly against women, girls, and

children. Offences typically take place online but can translate into real-world abuse.

Within these harm-focused environments, offenders share extreme and illicit imagery, ranging from violent and abusive content to extremist propaganda and animal cruelty. Over time, this can desensitise participants and normalise harmful behaviours.

According to the NCA, known reports of this type of activity in the UK have increased six-fold between 2022 and 2024. Intelligence assessments estimate that thousands of users across the UK and other western countries have exchanged millions of messages related to sexual and physical abuse in these spaces.

The Motivations Behind the Offending

While the motivations of offenders can vary, gaining notoriety and status within these groups appears to be a significant driver. Offenders often compete to inflict harm and share depraved content, sometimes underpinned by extreme belief systems that attempt to justify their actions. In certain cases, sexual gratification and financial profit are also factors.

In response to this growing threat, the NCA recommended a cohesive, multi-agency approach to combat this issue through intelligence gathering, prosecutions, and a deeper understanding of offender motivations.

TOEX's Crucial Role in Tackling the Threat

Recognising the complexity and borderless nature of these crimes, the NCA established a multi-agency working group. TOEX is a part of this group and brings a unique combination of technical expertise and operational experience to the table, supporting the NCA and other partners in their collective mission.

TOEX specialists are helping to identify and disrupt offenders, locate vulnerable victims, and provide crucial intelligence to ongoing investigations. Their work involves sophisticated digital analysis, operational coordination, and supporting frontline

officers in responding to these often highly sensitive and fast-moving cases.

As these offences cross both geographical and jurisdictional boundaries, TOEX's ability to operate collaboratively and flexibly across agencies and borders is essential. Their contribution ensures a rapid and effective response, making it harder for offenders to exploit digital anonymity and harm vulnerable individuals.

Looking Ahead

Though the emergence of harm-focused “Com groups” presents a serious challenge, it's important to highlight the proactive steps law enforcement is taking to combat this threat. Agencies like TOEX are at the forefront of this effort, working alongside the NCA, experts, and international partners to protect victims, prosecute offenders, and ultimately make the online world a safer place.



TOEX Spotlight: SWROCU

Stronger Together

SWROCU TOEX recognises that trusted relationships with law enforcement and partner agencies are essential to tackling organised crime. These connections support operational delivery and enhance understanding of complex crime types.

In August, team members visited the Romanian Embassy and met police and Home Affairs Attachés specialising in modern slavery and human trafficking—key issues affecting Romanian nationals in the UK. The visit deepened understanding of Romanian legal frameworks, operational challenges, and strategic trends. It also explored intelligence sharing and identified opportunities to close cross-border intelligence gaps. Insights and contacts from the visit have been shared across the TOEX network, strengthening our collective fight against organised crime.

Harnessing the Power of Data - for good!

Operation Pentelic is the SWROCU TOEX team's technical project aiming to identify users of online chat rooms who pose a risk of or are committing child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) offences, for onward development by online investigation teams.

Beginning in 2023, the tool has been developed in line with the policing user needs with a strong focus on stakeholder feedback and engagement. This resulted in national rollout of the tool during the summer of 2024 followed by regular updates shared across the network.

The Op Pentelic tool automatically undertakes keyword searching and geographic analysis, allowing investigators to interrogate millions of lines of data to identify high risk chat users in their region much faster than would be possible manually.

Most recently, collaboration with North East TOEX's Data Insight Analyst has led to the development in a new feature, allowing a large language model (the family of AI that powers ChatGPT) to further support the efficient risk scoring and prioritisation of chat users.

As a direct result of this work, online investigation teams have arrested two people in separate investigations, both of which made long journeys with the belief that they were going to abuse a child.

The project has been presented in front of a range of audiences, including regional strategic thematic delivery group meetings, conferences, and to Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls, Jess Phillips MP.

Assisting Forces with Complex Investigations

SWROCU TOEX regularly supports the region's five forces by providing dedicated intelligence and analytical expertise. At any one time, the team may be assisting several complex investigations into organised immigration crime (OIC), child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE), and modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT), by providing timely analysis, research and use of TOEX's Capabilities Environment.

TOEX has recently been working on a group-based CSAE investigation – by working at pace and analysing a variety of data sources, the team identified additional victims that required safeguarding as well as further offenders. TOEX's work significantly contributed to one of the offenders pleading guilty to a sexual offence.

SWROCU TOEX are keen to ensure open channels of communication with the forces' investigation teams – as a result, forces are invited to join TOEX's internal briefings, allowing for collaboration, information sharing and key updates to be acted on.

Op Galveston and Op Devine

To address key intelligence gaps, SWROCU TOEX are committed to being proactive and thinking outside the box—enabling the collection of vital intelligence to further understand serious and organised crime types.

Op Galveston - Intelligence surrounding OIC, and specifically clandestine entry into the United Kingdom via lorries, is limited. Op Galveston was set up by SWROCU TOEX and involved close collaboration and joint working with Border Force and Dorset Police. Building on previous experience, intelligence and leveraging the expertise of Border Force, lorries were stopped and searched as they disembarked from ferries. Officers from SWROCU TOEX and Dorset Police subsequently engaged with lorry drivers using a pre-written set of questions to ascertain drivers' knowledge of clandestine entry.

Op Devine - Officers from SWROCU TOEX attended immigration bail centres to engage with individuals signing on. The aim is to collect intelligence around OIC and enhance knowledge in relation to how individuals are entering the UK, and who and/or which Organised Crime Groups are involved.

Both of these operations are examples of innovation by SWROCU TOEX, who are filling intelligence gaps and striving to make real progress by identifying new lines of enquiry - the ultimate aim of these operations is to contribute towards TOEX's purpose, safeguarding victims and bringing perpetrators to justice.



National Data and Analytics Office Update

It's been a busy quarter for the NPCC Digital, Data and Technology Coordination Committee (DDaTCC), not least with the recent launch of the [National Policing Digital Strategy 2025-2030](#) (NPDS 2025-2030).

After our workforce, technology is the biggest spend for our service.

This new strategy will set a clearly defined roadmap for policing, taking into account the challenges and opportunities that rapidly advancing technology presents and empowering forces to make the best investment decisions when it comes to digital, data and technology.

The use and management of data has become essential to modern life and critical to an effective police service. Policing collects vast quantities of complex, highly sensitive data and, as such, data and analytics remain a key focus of the NPDS 2025-30.

The National Data and Analytics Office (NDAO) is a key deliverable of the NPDS 2025-2030 and is in place to transform the use of data across policing, providing centralised standards, direction, guidance, tools and services.

The NDAO will ensure:

- a data driven police service that is equipped to combat ever advancing criminal tactics
- a national framework for data management to ensure consistency across all forces
- insight led decision making to intercept criminal activity sooner, allowing the safeguarding of those most vulnerable to risk and harm without delay
- transparency in the ethical and proportionate use of policing data to improve public trust and confidence
- better performance, productivity and problem solving across the criminal justice system.

Within its analytics function, the NDAO aims to utilise good quality data ethically, to build tools that drive efficiencies and improve our service.

You can hear more about the NDAO from NDAO Director Kate Fisher-Stevens at the upcoming NPCC Innovation and Digital Summit, details of which can be found here: [NPCC Innovation and Digital Summit 2025](#)

Interesting Reads and Useful Links



NSPCC Learning has published a podcast episode which discusses child criminal exploitation (CCE) with the Service Head of the NSPCC's Helpline and a police detective from an exploitation team in England: [Podcast: Child criminal exploitation and the importance of early intervention | NSPCC Learning](#)



The Hydrant Programme and the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC) have published new research on ritual abuse: [Ritualistic abuse | The Hydrant Programme](#)



The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has published a news story reporting an increase in confirmed reports of AI-generated child sexual abuse imagery: [AI-generated child sexual abuse videos surge, experts warn of inevitable crisis](#)



The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and the National Crime Agency (NCA) have created guidance for professionals working with children and young people on understanding and responding to artificial intelligence (AI) generated child sexual abuse material: [AI CSAM Guides for Professionals | IWF & NCA](#)

Upcoming Partnership Events



[Online Fighting Grooming Gangs and Youth Exploitation Conference - 14 October 2025: Fighting Grooming Gangs and Youth Exploitation Conference](#)



[NPCC Innovation and Digital Summit – 20 – 22 October: NPCC Innovation and Digital Summit 2025](#)



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