

TACKLING ORGANISED

EXPLOITATION

PROGRAMME

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Strategic Update

As we reach the end of this financial year, I am reflecting on another exceptional twelve months for the programme.

The success of TOEX has been built upon a culture of innovation, empowerment, and crucially delivery, with effective leadership not simply a reflection of rank, but rather contributions in role by every team member and a strong sense of working together towards a common goal. I particularly note several successful partnership collaborations – the support and vision of Home Office colleagues, the coordination and leadership within the NCA, and the innovation and dedication of our industry partners. All the progress made has been a collective effort and seen us deliver an expert operational service to all forces across England and Wales, plus more technical 'firsts' to frontline practitioners.

This issue explores the TOEX delivery in the North-West, noting their success in investigating all forms of child exploitation, and service improvements regarding pernicious threats such as those posed by 'COM groups'. This dedication and expertise is replicated across the other ten TOEX teams that make up the network, and I was pleased to see the March survey results confirmed 100% (n.249) of investigators who responded would recommend TOEX to a colleague.

I seem to say every year that technical delivery has outstripped all expectations, and this year is no different. The TOEX Capabilities Environment (CE) is now offered free to frontline investigators in all 43 forces, with 39 Home Office forces and the NCA now accessing the platform and hosted tools. Scan Assist is spotlighted this time and TOEX will be supported by resources from the National Data Analytics Office (NDAO) to ensure the implementation of this helpful tool lands well in each force.

In a first for policing, following a rapid ten-week development and test process, TOEX created the Operation Beaconport



App which went 'live' on the CE in March, enabling all forces in England and Wales to directly input their closed case data for Group-Based CSE. This is phase one - delivering a comprehensive and coordinated data collection methodology - with future phases supporting analysis, enrichment and visualisations of the information leading to service improvements for victims and effective management of threat.

Sadly, this will be my final contribution to the TOEX E-Magazine as I am retiring in June, following 30 years officer service. Policing is a vocation - often a joy, sometimes not - but in the same way we all want to leave things a little better than we found them, the service also leaves an indelible mark on each of us.

TOEX will always be the pinnacle of my career and being the Director of such an exciting and innovative programme has been an absolute privilege. I will miss the energy and the people immensely. However, I depart with the confidence that the programme delivery speaks for itself, and the SOC leadership team will support TOEX in continuing to flourish and deliver an agile and innovative response to organised exploitation.

I hope you enjoy this issue and I thank you all for your continuing support to the programme.

#ThinkTOEX

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

New TOEX Tool Launched: Scan Assist

This month will see the launch of TOEX Scan Assist to all Capabilities Environment users.

As the name suggests, this tool has been developed to support threat area analysts internalising large amounts of free text intelligence reports.

Scan Assist supports uploads of bulk intelligence reports from any/many systems and extracts key subjects for automated intelligence dashboard creation – finding links between persons, addresses and other entities.

The only fields needed for upload are:

- **Intelligence Reference**
- **Intelligence Date**
- **Intelligence Text**

This design of Scan Assist follows a previous Power BI version modelled by TOEX Data Analysts, which has received the following feedback from users:

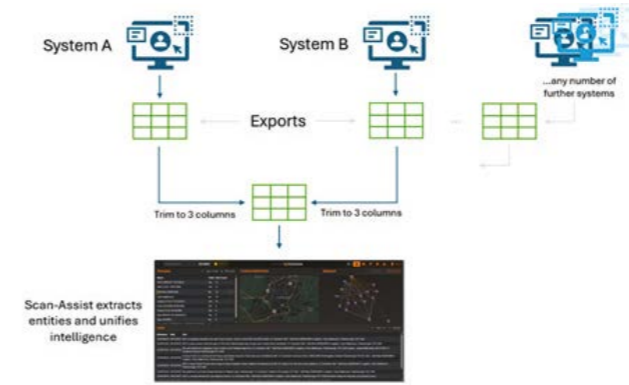
“We have got Scan-Assist working... First time I used it I found a 13-year-old not on the CE radar who clearly should have been.” - West Mercia Supt.

“[researcher] and I were in the office yesterday looking at this tool and it's been a success already!... With this tool, we'll be able to identify new threats which will be scored on APMIS and PND, very exciting.” - ERSOU CSAE Analyst.

The tool provides helpful features such as automated cohort detection (where many subjects are associating across intelligence reports), subject of interest list upload and Excel/i2 export.

Future roadmap considerations for the tool includes AI intelligence summarisation, subject profile export and predictive analytics.

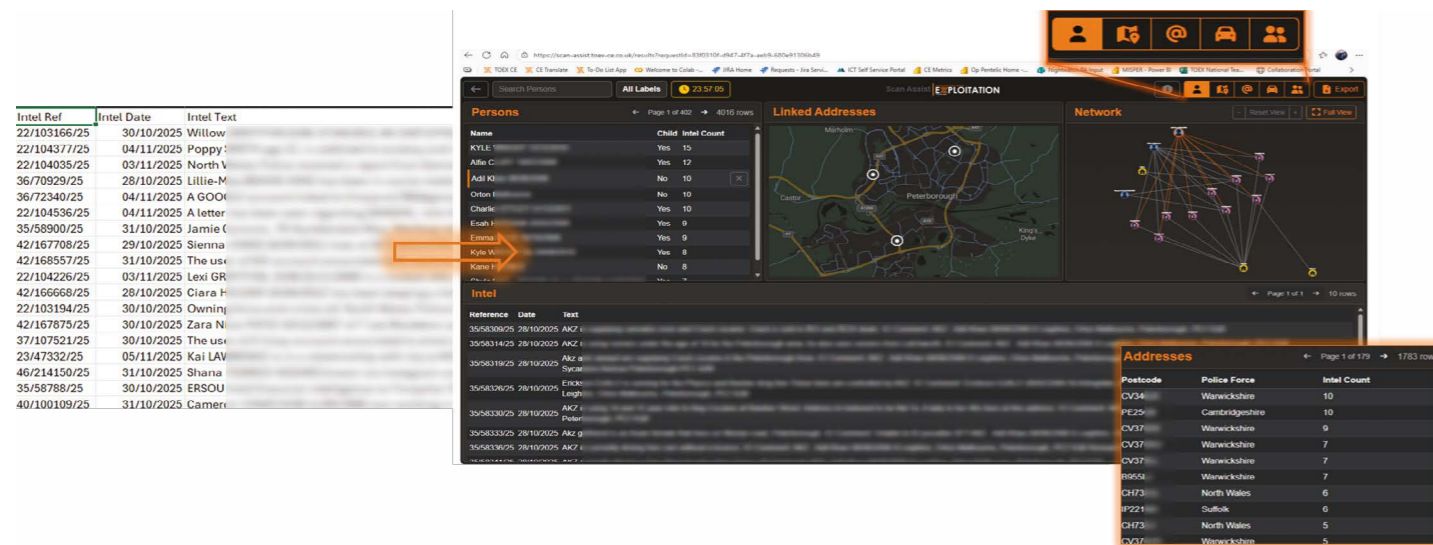
While it's possible to get started right away by uploading a scanning spreadsheet or RMS system export – more ambitious use cases will be able to combine intelligence from multiple systems to achieve a unified view:



“Officers and staff are used to siloed data causing analytical headaches, and they are frequently thwarted by there being financial or architectural hurdles in building long term data platforms. Scan Assist offers an alternative option to this problem and allows users to bring any data set for processing, targeted at current threat or risk.”

The application launches with an integrated tutorial module for new users, though TOEX are happy to provide training/CPD inputs to analytic teams by request – please email: capabilitiesenvironment@norfolk.police.uk

TOEX Lead Developer Jack Lambourne notes that, “Scan Assist is a hugely exciting opportunity. It enables policing to embrace multi-source analytics at pace without the traditional requirement of having to design and deliver expensive data platforms.



TOEX Spotlight: NWROCU

Our Mission

The NWROCU TOEX team is committed to helping develop intelligence in exploitation investigations, focusing where possible on offences against children, women and girls. On occasion we also support our forces with evidential products working closely with investigation teams and the CPS to ensure the best outcomes at court.

Our model in the North West differs from elsewhere in the country as the Detective Inspector who runs the team also serves as the County Lines Coordinator for the region, but given county lines usually involves the exploitation of the young and the vulnerable, this provides some clear overlaps and so we're able to pool our resources to service both functions.

As well as working with our six forces, we work closely with academia to ensure we learn about and share the most recent and relevant insights. Our own Senior Analyst is coming towards the end of her PHD

studying 'cuckooing' and the associated exploitation of vulnerable adults by county lines drugs gangs, and others in the team are looking to pursue further education soon.

A Shift in Focus

Over the last two years we've focused more on offences against children and have supported numerous investigations into child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE): perhaps the most notable success being Op Horsham, a Greater Manchester Police (GMP) investigation into a male from Merseyside who used various online personas to groom a young girl. The suspect was ultimately convicted of numerous sexual offences against a child and received a 20-year prison sentence. This was the first time someone has received a custodial sentence for inciting serious self-harm contrary to the Online Safety Act and we are incredibly proud in the part we played in this.



Despite our push to support more investigations involving offences against children we still support forces in the ever-present threat to adult sex workers. In an industry which is fraught with dangers leaving many women, and men, vulnerable to exploitation; we've helped to not only give our forces a sound strategic oversight of the scale of the problem, but we've also assisted on number of successful investigations. In Oldham, we assisted GMP with a case against six offenders for controlling prostitution and human trafficking after they brought a Romanian female into the UK on the pretence of legitimate cleaning work only to force her into sex work. The group were sentenced to a total of 16 years and six months. In another investigation into the exploitation of sex workers in Preston, we travelled abroad to assist Lancashire Police in obtaining further evidence from Romanian law enforcement to support their case.

Emerging Trends

More recently TOEX have worked closely with law enforcement nationally and internationally on investigations into 'Com Networks'. These groups, consisting often of teenage boys are sharing extreme, sadistic and misogynistic materials and collaborating in range of harmful behaviours. Moreover, they are known to

manipulate young and vulnerable people into harming themselves and others and involve themselves in criminal acts, all for kudos for the exploiter. Working closely with GMP, Lancashire and staff in our own ROCU we have assisted in successfully identifying, arresting and charging some of the most prolific offenders and continue to support these cases through the judicial process.

Sharing What We Learn

We are also supporting in the 'Prepare' space, using our experience of these investigations to educate others and help develop better approaches across all of law enforcement. In the last few weeks, we have presented to several internal and external partners on our experience investigating 'Com Networks' and have further inputs planned. We have also worked with our forces educating them about the benefits of using TOEX's Capabilities Environment and the suite of tools available to expedite their investigations.

The Future

Sadly, exploitation is not going anywhere. However, along with the rest of the TOEX network we believe we can work with forces to safeguard more victims, prosecute more dangerous offenders and ultimately create safer communities.



Day in the Life – TOEX Technical Lead

This feature piece has been written by TOEX Technical Lead, DCI Pat Thompson, following questions posed by the TOEX network. It will be a regular article in the e-magazine exploring the range of roles TOEX staff do across the network.

What opportunity or event made you passionate about data/tech within policing?

My path into data and technology within policing began with two major life events: changes to police pension regulations and a divorce. Both occurred close together, prompting me—after 12 years of service—to reassess whether policing was still the right long-term career.

Exploring job adverts, I noticed a cyber-security role offering a surprisingly high salary. Though I didn't understand the criteria, I became curious about moving into private-sector cyber security. I took a career break, studied relevant qualifications, and worked various jobs until I secured a cyber role at a fintech company. I quickly realised I disliked it; I missed the sense of public good that policing provides. When my career break ended, I resigned and returned to being a DC.

Around that time, my force began a major change programme to improve digital investigation and digital forensics. I was asked to lead it, which became a two-and-a-half-year opportunity to reshape how we handled digital content in investigations. I was also able to contribute to the digital elements of the Op Soteria review.

These combined experiences naturally steered me toward the TOEX role.



What are your goals for the TOEX Technical Team over the next five years?

I want to achieve three key goals over the coming years:

1. Restructure the Technical Team

Policing often claims it cannot recruit or retain technical talent due to private-sector salary competition. I disagree; our team's long-serving members prove otherwise. The issue is the lack of depth and progression for police staff. I intend to create a structure mirroring the Constable–Sergeant–Inspector pathway, with opportunities to specialise in applications development, data science, or a broader data role similar to the DIA function.

2. Deliver Operation Beaconport

Leading a national data-collection, analysis, and reporting exercise during a national inquiry is both daunting and exciting. The potential value is clear, and I'm genuinely enjoying being part of it.

3. Open the Capabilities Environment (CE) to the wider service

With the exception of Client Eye, every CE tool so far has originated from TOEX ideas and requirements. Yet policing is full of innovative ideas. I want the CE to become a space where non-TOEX teams collaborate with us to develop their concepts.

How did you progress into a more technical career path, and what guidance would you offer to others?

Beyond my career break, I've spent a significant amount of personal time learning. Between 2019 and 2023, I completed two MSc degrees—Criminology

and Computing Science—driven largely by imposter syndrome at different stages. I believe it's important to be credible when leading technical teams, both to policing colleagues and to technical professionals. Demonstrating ability through education and by maintaining operational DI responsibilities at weekends and on-call helps with that credibility.

This commitment to learning has now led me to pursue a doctorate, again partly due to imposter syndrome in the AI space but also because I have genuinely come to enjoy the learning process.

My advice to anyone wanting to enter a technical field is simple: **be passionate**. Hard work and passion open the right doors, and because the work can be intensely demanding, passion is essential to sustain it.

Are there any resources or learning platforms that helped you develop your technical expertise?

For those who thrive in self-directed learning, several online platforms are excellent:

- **Python:** Udemy – 100 Days of Code
- **Web development:** The Odin Project
- **Data science & machine learning:** Kaggle

In your view, what is the most significant challenge policing faces in adopting and using technology effectively?

From my experience over the last three years, policing's structures and politics run counter to agile delivery. Combined with limited technical understanding, this makes delivering at pace extremely difficult.

A clear example is the Translation application in the CE. Machine translation has existed since the Cold War and has evolved significantly. Yet the rise of language models—such as ChatGPT—has caused policing to conflate generative AI concerns with long-established machine-learning tools. This confusion has slowed adoption of proven, safe

technology and introduces political and structural challenges into nearly every delivery plan.

What have been the biggest challenges in rolling out the Capabilities Environment?

There has never been a nationally agreed process for rapidly delivering a non-commercial product like the CE. As a result, we had to go force-to-force demonstrating credibility and value. It has been a long and demanding journey, but absolutely worthwhile. Adoption is now nearly nationwide, with clear evidence of cost savings, time savings, and investigative benefits.

What are the biggest lessons learned regarding the Capabilities Environment?

The biggest lesson—though it may sound corny—is that being decent and helpful matters enormously. Technical skill alone is meaningless without a mission-driven approach. I've also learned not to let policing politics or structural shifts derail our direction. The team has endured because we stay focused on the mission and consistently operate by being helpful and collaborative.

What are you proudest of from the last year?

The team. Working with people who want to be here, want to contribute, do the right thing, and push innovation has been a privilege—both the core team and our contracted partners.

How do you think the blend of police officers and police staff works in TOEX?

It's essential. I've seen brilliant technical experts struggle to translate their work into operational policing impact, and officers who are instinctively technophobic. Having both perspectives in the same team allows technical staff to test ideas against real-world policing needs, and operational staff to better understand what technology can offer and request tools that genuinely help.

The full version of this article can be found on the TOEX website.

NSOC Transition

This quarter we were pleased to announce that the Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) Programme moved to sit under the National Police Chiefs' Council Serious and Organised Crime (NSOC) Portfolio.

The change in governance, which was formally agreed by the National Crime Coordination Committee in January 2026, reflects where TOEX does much of its work – within Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU), which tackle serious and organised crime across the country.

By aligning TOEX with the NSOC Portfolio, the programme will be more closely connected to the national structures that oversee how police respond to organised criminality and exploitation. This move will strengthen TOEX's reach and influence as it continues to deliver high quality intelligence, analytical and technical support to investigators in all 43 police forces.

As part of the NSOC Portfolio, the programme will have greater access to senior SOC leadership, specialist support teams and analytical resources. This will help TOEX continue to develop and share its expertise across policing, and to play a central role in shaping how forces work together to protect vulnerable people.

TOEX will also be closely involved in work to create a more joined-up approach to tackling vulnerability across the ROCU network, helping ensure that local forces can draw on the right support when they need it. In addition, TOEX technical applications and expertise will be brought to bear against these pernicious threats.



TOEX Director, Detective Chief Superintendent Kate Thacker KPM, said:

“I would like to extend my sincere thanks to DCC Dave McLaren, Staff Officer Vicky Hough and colleagues across the National Intelligence Portfolio for their support and partnership over recent years. Their commitment has been invaluable to TOEX's development.”

“As we move into this next chapter, this transition strengthens our ability to champion victims, shape national policy, and drive improvements in the police response to exploitation across England and Wales.”

NPCC SOC Portfolio Lead, DCC Wendy Gunney, said:

“I am delighted to welcome the TOEX Programme into the NPCC SOC Portfolio. The work of TOEX has never been more vital, as we look to identify and bring to justice those responsible for the exploitation of the most vulnerable in our communities.”

“I look forward to doing all I can to support its continuing success and development.”

National Intelligence Awards

The National Intelligence Conference and Awards were held on 27 and 28 January – to share best practice and learning as well as celebrate the exceptional work of individuals from across the intelligence community.

The vision of the National Intelligence Portfolio is to inspire, advocate and support excellence and professionalism within the intelligence community of UK policing and law enforcement partner agencies, to protect and serve the public. The aspiration for the portfolio ensures policing is striving to be progressive and innovative, utilising and creating evidence-based methodology, working with partners and academia, to provide the most effective and cutting-edge intelligence capability.

As part of the awards evening, the TOEX award is one of the categories recognised. And this year, we're pleased to announce that the joint winners were Intel Analyst Joanne Davies and IDO Emma Harris from Tarian TOEX!

Joanne and Emma were commended for their expertise whilst investigating the sexual and criminal exploitation of children in Cardiff city centre - providing crucial information in a fast paced and dynamic investigation, including identifying victims and their vulnerability, criminal associates, travel patterns and locations of interest for police action.

13 nominations were entered for this award and all runners up received 'Good Work Recognition' certificates from the NPCC lead for Intelligence, Deputy Chief Constable Dave McLaren.

Well done to everyone who was nominated!



Interesting Reads and Useful Links



The National Crime Agency (NCA) has published a news story about the scale and prevalence of the child sexual abuse threat across the UK: [Child sexual abuse is increasing in severity, complexity and accessibility, say policing leads - National Crime Agency](#)



The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has updated its 'honour'-based abuse guidance to include harmful practices such as spiritual or ritualistic abuse linked to beliefs in witchcraft, spirit possession or demonic influence: [Spiritual and immigration abuse included in CPS 'honour'-based abuse guidance for first time | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)



National policing launches new resources to strengthen the response to abuse linked to witchcraft, spirit possession and ritualistic abuse: [Witchcraft, Spirit Possession and Ritualistic Abuse: Understanding a Hidden and Under-Reported Harm | The Hydrant Programme](#)

Upcoming Partnership Events

✘ AI in Policing Conference – 24 April 2026: [AI in Policing Conference - Westminster Insight](#)

✘ Violence Against Women and Girls Online Conference – 6 May 2026: [Violence Against Women and Girls Conference](#)

✘ International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute (IPPPRI) Conference – 8 - 10 June 2026: [IPPPRI26: Prioritising Prevention - ARU](#)

✘ Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Conference – Online and In-Person – 29 June 2026: [Violence Against Women & Girls - Westminster Insight](#)

Notes



Notes

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