

TACKLING ORGANISED

EXPLOITATION

PROGRAMME

Issue 3 | October - December 2022

Inside this issue:

Operation Strive

VAWG and Communications

YHROCU Launch

Bright Future



Contents

Strategic Update	3
Operation Strive	4
VAWG and Communications	6
Ensuring a Thriving Future for Survivors of Slavery and Exploitation	8
Bright Future	9
Happy Birthday to our Pilot Regions!	10
YHROCU Launch	11
EMSOU Award	12
Interesting Reads and Useful Links	13
Upcoming Partnership Events	13

Strategic update



All of the regional TOEX teams are launching the operational response and are now keen to engage with their local force leads and organised exploitation investigators in support of SOC demand. With a network of over 150 officers and staff nationally, TOEX contains intelligence and analytical subject-matter experts that will help forces to tackle the threat of organised exploitation in all its forms, in a timely and effective manner. We encourage you to reach out, via the ROCU Gateway to access TOEX capacity and capabilities, if you are dealing with exploitation that extends beyond the reach of your force or resources.

The TOEX operating model is scalable. Whilst we search for higher-tier offenders, who are benefitting by orchestrating the exploitation of the vulnerable, we are also keen to help when intelligence suggests the offending is reaching beyond your county borders and potentially beyond the scope of your investigations. Approved taskings don't always have to come with high MoRiLE scores or vast geographical scale - if you think that TOEX may be able to assist in the progression of your exploitation investigation, reach out to your ROCU!

It is also an exciting time for the development of the TOEX technical workstreams. Our team of Developers and Data Insight Analysts are working hard alongside our industry partners, Simpsons Associates, to deliver effective, real-world operational analytics. These are being plugged into Force Tasking meetings for the nine forces that contribute policing data to our platform, for example the VAWG Force Profile, to inform force leads on the strategic and tactical opportunities

of leveraging data to identify perpetrators and victims of crime. We are hoping that this development will prove compelling evidence to secure funding support for uplift to a national data model - we will keep you updated with progress.

Finally, we have secured support from our Home Office sponsors and the leads of the Police Digital Service to host a TOEX Capabilities Environment in their national cloud architecture. We will work with them to have this built and tested within TOEX over the next quarter and discuss options for upscale thereafter. This will represent the first 'shared services for policing' and will give us the ability to design, test and operationalise data tools and analytical capabilities across our UK network, and beyond. The first tool that is ready for deployment to this 'virtual toolbox' will be TOEX Translate (translation of phone CSV file downloads). We'll share an update in the next edition, with more details on how and when you'll be able to access this and other beneficial data tools - watch this space!

On behalf of the whole TOEX team, I wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

National Strategic Coordinator
T/Detective Chief Superintendent Kate Thacker

Operation Strive

Adult service websites (ASWs) remain the most significant enabler within the sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and human trafficking threat.

Even where a trafficking element may not be present, those advertised on the sites may have other vulnerabilities, which require safeguarding interventions or may be subject to other offences related to sex work and prostitution, harassment, or assault.

In recent months, TOEX has undertaken extensive work with adult service websites, using key indicators on these platforms to identify whether users may be a victim of exploitation as well as ensuring the ASWs have the ability to refer this information to law enforcement, who can take appropriate action against those facilitating this criminality.

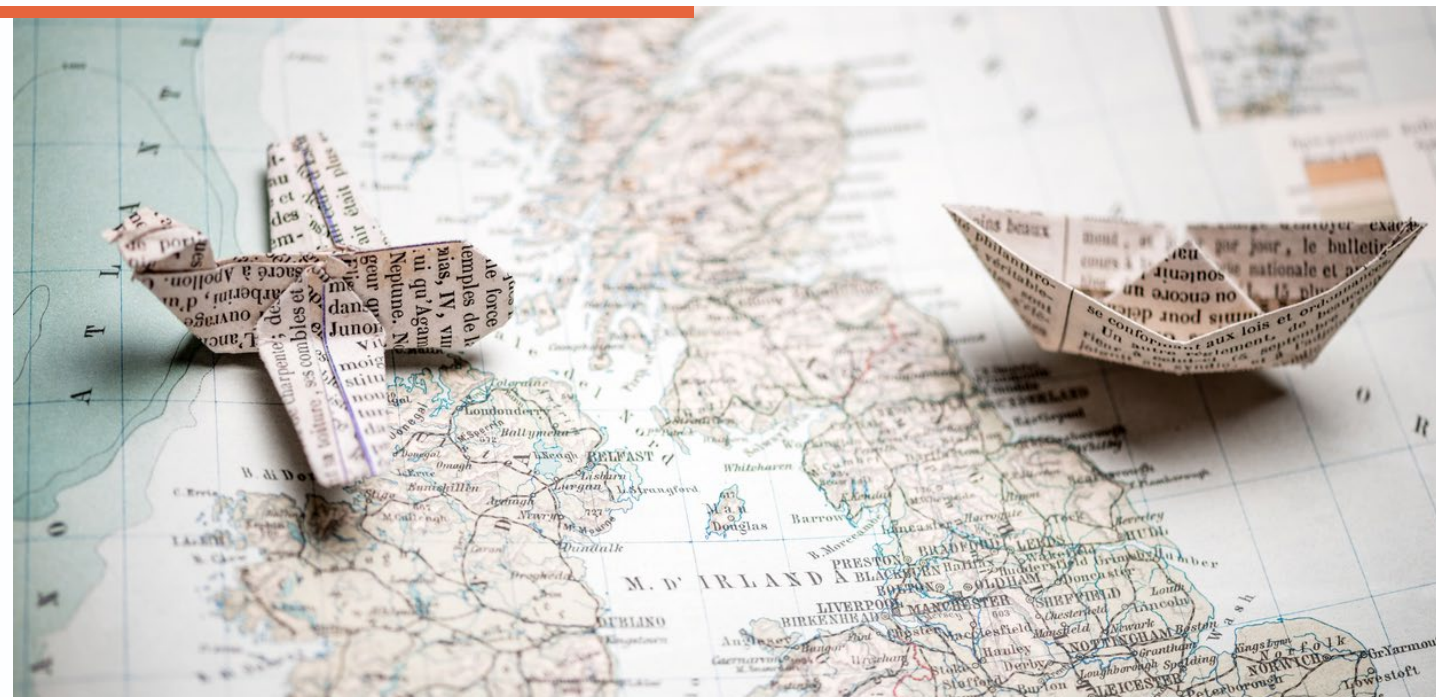
The exploitation indicators, ranging from low to high risk, include, but are not limited to:

- Account linked to other accounts by payer/phone number sharing

- Multiple phone numbers across the adverts on one account
- A male attempting to pay for adverts
- Flagged by a customer suspected underage/ trafficking and/or exploitation.

Between August and October 2022, the TOEX team carried out a pilot (Operation Strive) with an ASW, Vivastreet, whereby the provider would send weekly referrals to TOEX using the agreed indicators and include reasons for the referral. Once the referral had been risk assessed, TOEX then worked exploring the adverts, researching key entities, and developing an intelligence package where exploitation was suspected.

One such referral involved two men, one Romanian and one Portuguese/Brazilian, who were paying for ten sex worker accounts, posting adverts in multiple regions. Intelligence suggested that eight email addresses were being used to advertise women in the London, Southeast and Northeast areas, 13 phone numbers



were being used across the adverts and there were four names linked to paying for the adverts. The TOEX team developed a package to fill significant intelligence gaps regarding whether any women were at risk, whether males were acting as “agents” for women, and/or if exploitation was occurring as well as whether law enforcement were already aware of this group and a live investigation was ongoing.

In analysing the adverts, the TOEX team deemed this case required further investigation with a number of exploitation indicators identified – customer reviews stated:

“I turned up and it wasn’t the girl in the picture, but a woman in her late 30s that didn’t speak English.”
“Sounds like a maid takes her calls/texts and says yes to stuff she’s not down with.”

As a result of TOEX support, a brothel has been identified for local safeguarding visits, all intelligence gathered from this work has been added to police intel systems and links have been made to an operation into an OCG believed to be trafficking Romanian females into and around the UK, forcing them into prostitution.

In total, the pilot identified 355 individual adverts of concern and 47 cases (like the one above) were referred for further action.

Intelligence and Analytics Lead, Lucy Rogers said: “I have been extremely impressed with the proactivity and support given to us by Vivastreet with Op Strive. It is clear that they are keen to protect their users from harm and work with charities and police to safeguard victims of exploitation.”

Will Bandy, Head of Safety and Compliance at Vivastreet, said: “As a former police officer myself, I am well aware of the value of the data that ASWs hold, and we have long advocated for a unified national referral facility for ASWs. Vivastreet is committed to being the safest and most trusted platform for sex workers to advertise and as such we have in place extensive proactive measures to detect and deter criminals operating on our platform.

“As part of our ongoing commitment towards safety, we have introduced a dedicated Safeguarding Hub to focus on the identification of any suspicious content and ensure timely notifications are made to law enforcement internationally.

“That is why this national TOEX trial is so valuable and important, and we very much hope that it can become a permanent process, not only for us, but across the industry.”



VAWG and Communications

by Sarah Wolf – NPCC VAWG Strategic Communications Lead

TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS

When DCC Maggie Blyth began her national policing role as lead for violence against women and girls (VAWG) in October 2021 she said: “My mission is to turn the tables on violent men so it’s them who feel under threat, not innocent women and girls.” With these words she set out her vision to bring consistency to the way policing tackles VAWG and in every media interview, presentation, and speaker session since she has repeated these words.

Having a clear vision and being able to articulate it is a crucial part of communications. And never more so in an area which is – quite rightly – under the political and societal spotlight right now.

Working in an area which is so vital is also so daunting. There are many deliverables, many workstreams, many priorities. The joint NPCC and College of Policing Taskforce, set up by DCC Blyth, handles projects ranging from evaluating best practice from across forces through to reporting on performance, misconduct, and crime outcomes. There are many working groups,

the stakeholders are broad, varied, and disparate from large charities such as Refuge through to single activists engaged with vulnerable women from minoritised communities. And we work closely with our key partners from the Home Office and government, giving regular updates on progress, supporting with ministerial visits, and feeding into the cross-governmental VAWG comms group.

There are two distinct elements to the communications strategy – media and stakeholder engagement. Both are needed, are intertwined, and will help to bring about better understanding of the challenges, and the progress. Over the past 12 months there have been multiple progressions, many of which have needed careful comms handling, such as our learnings review into misconduct cases.

As we move into year two of the VAWG framework, one thing stands out above all others, and that is partnership. Partnership from the NPCC and College of Policing, partnership across forces and with colleagues from across policing, including the TOEX Programme, who have developed a number of fully interactive and intuitive VAWG force profiles, in collaboration with Maggie’s team, giving investigators the unique opportunity to conflate and overlay intelligence and datasets, allowing visualisation of the threat.

Partnership is crucial in delivering the portfolio’s priorities and between us, we can deliver policing’s vision.

TOEX Update

By the end of December, the TOEX VAWG Force Profiles will be ‘live’ in eight counties, providing a strategic understanding of the threat of VAWG in those forces, but crucially evidence-based subject profiles for tactical interventions. The ability to model policing data across multiple counties and conflate it against additional datasets of interest, such as missing persons, enables us to identify suspects and victims of VAWG that are high risk due to the gravity of the offences, and/or their frequency. In turn this supports effective interventions for victims and perpetrators alike.

Ch/Supt Andy Waldie, Essex Police said: “Our latest Essex pack had a young male



highlighted as number one offender.

“Unfortunately, before this male went into our force tasking this afternoon, he was arrested for rape. For me, this shows the TOEX system works. He is a clear threat and with his offending spilt between three different Essex towns.

“I am convinced TOEX works and is the way forward.”



Ensuring a Thriving Future for Survivors of Slavery and Exploitation

Causeway is an organisation, which specialises in supporting marginalised and vulnerable people, including survivors of modern slavery and trafficking.

We are a sub-contractor of the Salvation Army who have the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract from the Home Office. The people supported by our service are a mixture of foreign nationals and UK citizens and have been referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) by first responders such as the police or social services.

We run fifteen safe houses across Merseyside, Sunderland, Bolton, and South Yorkshire for people rescued from exploitation, as well as outreach programmes for survivors in the community.

For many of the people we support, the act of making choices about their own lives, such as where to go or how to spend their day, was taken away from them. It can therefore take a while for some of their confidence and self-esteem to be brought back up to levels that allow them to live and act independently. For some, the

simple act of going to a shop or getting the bus alone, is a major step forward in their recovery process.

In the past, many people who moved on from NRM support found it difficult to integrate back into society. Challenges around entering the work force, finding suitable housing, or having no one to turn to in a time of crisis, meant that many survivors of exploitation were falling into drug or alcohol abuse, homelessness, or were being re-trafficked due to their ongoing vulnerabilities.

We started a 'reach-in' service that allowed people who had left our support to still call us for help or advice should they need it. This service has since been included in all NRM support across the country as it proved so successful in allowing vulnerable and isolated people to feel, and know, they were not alone.

CAUSEWAY
FREE TO LIVE



Bright Future

Bright Future Co-op started in 2017 with a mission to see survivors of modern slavery fully restored, living with dignity through sustainable and safe pathways to permanent employment.

A lack of confidence, qualifications, job history and interview experience were some of the major barriers for survivors accessing employment. Causeway Partnered with the Coop Group to develop Bright Future; a fast tracked and accessible route to employment for survivors of Modern Slavery.

Bright Future Cooperative consists of over 30 business members and referrer members across the UK. The cooperative model allows for collaboration and promotes a sustainable approach to ensuring all survivors are fully supported into employment, to rebuild their lives with their choice at the forefront. Most importantly, access to sustainable employment gives survivors control over their future and reduces their risk of re-exploitation.

An experience of safe employment is particularly invaluable for survivors of Modern Slavery due to their exploitation of working and Bright Future is proud to hold a 72% success rate. One candidate who has now been in work with the same employer for the past 11 months said:



"Bright Future gave me hope. Everyone was very supportive and kind, we overcame any barriers together. I love working again."

If you're undertaking such complex investigations, and/or supporting the safeguarding of those affected, please link in with these partners and consider them for engagement at the appropriate time.


**Bright
Future**

Happy Birthday to our Pilot Regions!

As we onboard our new regional teams, we're celebrating 12-months since our pilot regions became fully operational.

Following a successful funding settlement of £4m from the Home Office for FY21/22, the programme was able to create dedicated and skilled teams, with intelligence and analytical expertise, within three of the Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) in the Eastern (ERSOU), East Midland (EMSOU) and West Midland (ROCUWM) areas.

During the pilot year, more than 80 complex cases were supported by these teams with the increased capacity and capability provided to forces resulting in more efficient and effective intelligence development, and the wide-ranging exploitation of intelligence and data leading to further victims being safeguarded, new suspects and persons of interest being identified, arrests being possible at an earlier stage in the investigation and further harm being prevented.

During the last year, the three pilot regions achieved:



78 people safeguarded



10 organised crime groups identified



74 high-harm threats supported by intelligence development across the regions

Adult sexual exploitation cases, which usually includes elements of modern slavery and human trafficking, have seen the highest number of requests for support from ERSOU, EMSOU and ROCUWM.

We have already featured some of these as case studies in our previous e-mag editions, including Operation Headdress, which saw TOEX products directly supporting disruption activity against a threat that had not previously been managed due to insufficient capacity and capability locally, and Operation Booker, which targeted upstream exploitation and has helped forge positive relationships with other parts of the SOC system.

In all cases, it was recognised that without TOEX support, the harm being caused would not have been identified and the exploitation would have remained hidden.

To read more on these operations, visit our [website](#).



YHROCU Launch

As our pilot regions celebrate their first birthday, some of other regional teams are now launching.

Yorkshire and Humberside ROCU (YH ROCU) officially launched their TOEX team on Monday 28 November with articles published both internally to their four constituent forces of North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, and Humberside Police, as well as externally across their website and social media channels.

Detective Chief Superintendent Carl Galvin said: "The 28th of November 2022 marks a key date in YH ROCU's history, commencing the crucial ascendance

of TOEX's permanency within our region beyond the three-year fund phase and placing exploitation on a firm and equal footing with other, more traditionally regarded SOC Policing responses.

"In line with our mission to keep our communities safe and create a hostile environment for SOC criminality, TOEX will ensure that those involved in organised exploitation are identified, disrupted and dismantled."

To speak to the YH ROCU TOEX team, please contact: TOEX@yhrocu.police.uk


EMSOU Award


The EMSOU TOEX team was recognised for their work in safeguarding 27 vulnerable people from modern slavery as part of a joint operation with Romanian authorities. A number of warrants were carried out in Northamptonshire and overseas, thanks to the intelligence garnered by the team, and resulted in seven arrests.


You can read more about the operation here: [Operation Booker](#) | [TOEX](#)





Interesting Reads and Useful Links


- 


The Church of England has published an internal review of sexual abuse cases
- 


The Children's Society 'Look Closer' campaign, with the British Transport Police and National County Lines Coordination Centre, to spot the signs of child exploitation and how to report it
- 


What Works for Children's Social Care has published a systematic review of UK and international qualitative studies that examine safeguarding practices for young people and young adults with lived experience of child sexual exploitation (CSE)
- 

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has launched a new specialist unit to deal with the increasing number of incidents of cryptocurrency being used to pay for child sexual abuse (CSA) content online
- 

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) for England and Wales has published its final report
- 


The Home Office has published statistics breaking down the number of potential modern slavery victims referred in the UK between July and September 2022
- 

ECPAT UK has published findings from a participatory research study with young people who have experienced modern slavery
- 


The Youth Endowment Fund has published 'Children, violence and vulnerability 2022' report, which combines findings from a survey of over 2,000 children and an analysis of national datasets to understand young people's experiences of violence today
- 

In partnership with Forensic Analytics, Crest Advisory hosted a roundtable discussion to explore the links between technology and VAWG and identify gaps in evidence

Upcoming Partnership Events

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VKPP Conference – 15 March 2023
- 

Tackling Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Digital Conference - 27 February 2023:
[Click here for more information](#)
- 

Safer Internet Day – 7 February 2023

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