

Sexual Crime in Renfrewshire & Inverclyde Division: 2018/19 (April - November): Briefing Paper



GROUP 2 CRIME OVERVIEW

'Group 2 crime' incorporates a range of sexual offences ranging from serious sexual offences such as rape and indecent and sexual assault, to public indecency, sexual exposure, indecent communications and taking, distributing or possessing indecent photos of children.

INCREASING TREND

A steady increase has been observed in relation to the volume of reported sexual crime in Renfrewshire & Inverclyde, and by extension throughout the Force area of Police Scotland. A total of 452 crimes were recorded between April and November 2018, up 25.9% on the same period in 2017 (90 additional crimes), and 68.3% on the preceding five year average.



The primary sexual crime categories, which have increased most significantly are sexual assault of females aged 16 years and above (+25 crimes) and rape of females aged 16 and over (+26 crimes) - with non-recent reports comprising a significant proportion of these offences (40%). These two crime types are amongst the most common type of reported sexual crime in 2018/19, together accounting for

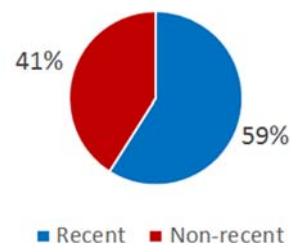
25% of the overall volume of Group 2 reports.

NON-RECENT REPORTING

It should be noted that the volume of non-recent reporting (i.e. crimes which occurred more than one year prior to the date of being reported to the police) has increased considerably in recent years, rising nearly 27% (40 crimes) compared to 2017. *This accounts for nearly half of the 90 additional crime reports received in 2018, compared to the previous year.* As a result, more than **41%** of sexual offences reported in 2018/19 are non-recent in nature.



Recent vs Non-Recent Reporting



Several factors are assessed to have contributed to this increasing volume of non-recent reporting, including local and national Police Scotland campaigns intended to increase awareness of such crimes and to instil victims with confidence that reports will be thoroughly investigated regardless of the passage of time.



Continual improvements in investigative approaches have also resulted in an increasing volume of crimes, which are identified via proactivity of police and partners (e.g. ex-partners of sexual offenders being interviewed to identify whether recent offences represent earlier and long standing sexual offending). Other potential factors include non-recent reports of sexual offences involving prominent



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public figures & institutions, which has also increased public awareness of the issue.

CYBER-ENABLED CRIMES

Another significant factor in the increasing volume of sexual crimes in the current year is the increasing availability, usage and 'digital literacy' of the general public and in particular young people. Analysis has identified that a significant and growing proportion of sexual offences are cyber-enabled. Cyber-enabled crimes are existing crimes that have been transformed in scale or form by their use of the internet. The continual growth of the internet has afforded sexual offenders opportunities to carry out offences on a wider scale.



While there are continued challenges in relation to the recording and measurement of cyber-enabled crime, between a quarter and one third of sexual offences in the current year are assessed to have a cyber-enabled element, with indications of a small increase in the volume of cyber-enabled sexual crimes in the current year. This incorporates offences such as sending indecent images and communications via the internet, indecent communications with children, grooming offences and possession of indecent images of children (IIOC).

In addition, it is assessed that well-publicised online safety and prevention campaigns have increased parents' and guardians' levels of awareness in relation to children's use of smartphones and social network platforms with the knock-on effect of an increasing proportion of crimes being 'proactively' identified by parents conducting checks of their children's profiles and/or devices, and then reporting criminal activity to the police.



individuals creating 'decoy' profiles of minors online, thereafter engaging with adult offenders who initiate inappropriate and sexualised contact with said profiles and reporting any identified offences to the police. 15 crimes have been raised as a result of online vigilante activity in the current year, with no such crimes recorded in the previous year.



ONLINE VIGILANTE ACTIVITY

A further driver underlying the increase in recorded sexual offences is the proliferation of 'online vigilante' activity. This involves organised groups of