

Crime and Courts Bill

Fact sheet 11 of 12 on the National Crime Agency

The National Crime Agency: child protection

THE NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY

1. The NCA will be a UK wide crime-fighting agency, which will have a highly visible, national profile committed to protecting the public. It will lead the UK's fight against serious and organised crime.
2. Subject to the passage of the Bill, the National Crime Agency will be established by the end of 2013, at the centre of the reformed law enforcement landscape. It will build on the strengths of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), including the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP); connecting the efforts of local law enforcement and neighbourhood action to national agencies and action overseas, in order to coordinate the fight against some of the UK's most sophisticated and harmful criminals.
3. The National Crime Agency will protect the public by:
 - assessing the threat from serious, organised and complex crime;
 - using specialist expertise to determine, task and coordinate and manage the response to those threats – establishing what needs to be done and by whom; and
 - deploying specialist resource to tackle the threat or in support of others; for example, through the UK Human Trafficking Centre, Missing Persons Bureau, Serious Crime Analysis, and National Cyber Crime Unit.
4. The National Crime Agency will therefore play a vital role in countering the threat to children and ensuring they are better protected. As well as building on CEOP's existing role as the national centre dedicated to working with others to protect children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, the NCA will also be subject to a new statutory duty which in essence is to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, across all of its functions and activities.

What is the threat to children from child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation?

5. The threat to children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation has changed considerably over the past 20 years. Developments in and the increasing use of technology, as well as cheap foreign travel, have meant the threat is becoming ever more prevalent.

6. Opportunities for those who would seek to harm children have increased significantly and continue to do so. Children can now be sexually abused without ever meeting their abuser. Images from previously hidden intra-familial abuse are now shared and distributed across wide networks of offenders in the online environment. Increasingly, the profile of abusers is widening, for example, to include women. Vulnerable children are being moved between towns and cities to be sexually exploited by groups of men. Some children are trafficked repeatedly across continents to be exploited in the UK through prostitution, labour, domestic servitude, benefit fraud and petty crime. It is now a complicated, multi-faceted problem that is no longer simply local.
7. Between 2006 and 2011, 1038 children were subject to safeguarding or protection activity as a direct result of the activity of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). 1644 suspects were arrested as a result of CEOP's investigative and intelligence work and 394 high risk sex offender networks were disrupted and dismantled.

What difference will the National Crime Agency make to protecting children?

8. The NCA will be a national Agency with international responsibilities. It will discharge its remit for the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable children through CEOP by providing a wider and coordinated focus on preventing and investigating serious criminality in the form of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.
9. The protection of children remains first and foremost the responsibility of local services, who are best placed to assess and manage the threats to the well-being and safety of all of the children in their local communities. However, that work will benefit from the NCA's ability to deliver a single national intelligence picture of serious, organised and complex crime. It will use that to prioritise action and, for the first time, be in a position to coordinate the law enforcement response; ensuring that appropriate action is taken against criminals at the right level, led by the right agency.
10. To support this work, the NCA will have four distinct operational Commands, each led by a senior experienced individual, which will set the priorities for the threats it is responsible for. CEOP will be one of these four Commands; reflecting the importance of child protection within the Agency's work. Governance arrangements will be established, allied to the work of each NCA command, which will support the NCA's leadership role in determining the threat and the law enforcement response.

11. All the operational commands within the NCA will be distinct, but will work closely together. They will be supported by an intelligence hub and by a National Cyber Crime Unit. Actionable intelligence will sit at the heart of the NCA, to drive its operational activity and to set the national operational agenda. This intelligence will highlight those instances where child exploitation and abuse links to other forms of serious, organised criminality. As part of the NCA, CEOP will therefore have access to the Agency's wider intelligence and investigative resources; providing a strong base for increasingly effective operational work.
12. The need to protect children from exploitation, trafficking and abuse will drive many aspects of the National Crime Agency's work. The whole Agency will therefore be brought under the same duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children that already applies to public bodies, including the police. This duty, set out in sections 11 and 28 of the Children's Act 2004, means that the Agency will give appropriate priority to its responsibilities towards children when it comes into contact with them. This is a very positive step, ensuring that the NCA will share early concerns and take preventative action before a crisis develops. These requirements will form part of the training that each and every NCA officer will receive.

What sort of operational impact will the NCA have in protecting children?

13. There will be many areas where the NCA will help to protect children through the effective use of its specialist resources, such as:
 - the ability for information on various criminal activities to be compared, in order to identify links and networks and provide for a wider range of responses to be considered;
 - by improving the response at our borders, which will: help disrupt the activities of child sex offenders who travel from/into the UK; support efforts to identify, locate and safely recover abducted children; and better coordinate activity to tackle the trafficking of children into the UK;
 - in addition to CEOP's expertise, the work of the NCA's National Cyber Crime Unit will provide a national dedicated resource to tackle all forms of cyber crime; adding supportive capacity and capability, to help reduce opportunities for criminals to exploit technology and the internet to sexually abuse and exploit children;
 - joining up work to disrupt the activities of local organised crime groups, who may also be sexually exploiting young people; and

- by tackling economic crime, particularly identity fraud, which will reduce the opportunities for child sex offenders to mask their activities on and offline, or to frustrate and evade the intention behind the registration provisions under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 by using false identities.

What will CEOP in the NCA actually look like?

14. CEOP has been a significant success story since its creation as an operationally independent part of SOCA. While most crimes against children are dealt with by local police forces, there are areas where only a national approach can be effective. CEOP has proved this, leading action to tackle paedophile networks not only within the UK, but internationally. We want to build on this success to ensure that children are even better protected in the future.
15. As part of the NCA, CEOP will have important opportunities to enhance the national and international effort to protect children. While many child sex offenders are not financially motivated, their networks are geographically widespread and require a national and international response. CEOP's work will form part of a holistic response to better tackle child trafficking, missing children, and those children who are being sexually exploited by organised criminal gangs.
16. CEOP has built strong relationships with a wide range of external stakeholders, both nationally and internationally, in order to better protect children. These include police forces in the UK and overseas, child protection agencies, charities and the private sector. CEOP's partnerships with the private and voluntary sector provide valuable support, both financially and in kind. CEOP will continue to build and develop these partnerships and relationships as part of the NCA, as well as seeking to develop new relationships with other stakeholders where appropriate.
17. Indeed, the build of the NCA as a whole will take inspiration from CEOP's success in developing a holistic approach to tackling a problem; its ability to create a multi-disciplinary workforce; and the way in which it has attracted partners from the private and voluntary sectors to improve the overall approach to protecting the public.
18. In moving to the NCA, CEOP will build on the six principles for its operating model, as set out in the NCA Plan published in June 2010. The Government has made the commitment that CEOP will:
 - retain its operational independence within the context of the NCA;
 - have clear, delegated authority for its budget;
 - continue to include external partners in its governance;
 - retain its well-known brand;

- retain its mixed economy of staff, from a variety of disciplines; and
 - continue its innovative partnerships with the public, private and third sector and have the ability to raise and hold funds from donors.
19. These six principles will be enshrined in the Framework Document for the National Crime Agency, which will be agreed between the Home Secretary and the NCA Director General, who will both be under a legal duty to have regard to it.

How will CEOP and the NCA help address child trafficking?

20. Working across the Agency's internal structures (such as CEOP, the UK Human Trafficking Centre, the NCA's Border Policing Command, and the National Missing Persons Bureau) and with external partners such as Border Force, the NCA will help identify missing children who are being taken out of or brought into the UK, and ensure that the appropriate action is taken. These links will be able to prevent child sex offenders leaving or coming into the UK to commit crimes against children, whether here or abroad.
21. CEOP will have access to the full range of operational tools at the disposal of the NCA to prevent harm to children in the UK and abroad and disrupt the activities of paedophiles. CEOP will also benefit from the relationships that will be developed with partners from the police service and the wider law enforcement community through tasking and coordination and mutual assistance.

What about CEOP's role in tackling missing children?

22. CEOP has developed significant experience and expertise in helping to protect vulnerable children. Recognising that the risks and vulnerabilities faced by children are not the same as adults, the Government took the decision that CEOP should take the national lead. This will help ensure that the right arrangements and support are in place to: help prevent children going missing; reduce the risks and harm they face whilst missing; and make sure that police forces responding to missing children incidents are equipped with the best training and support to tackle the issue. Being part of the NCA will only enhance CEOP's ability to further build on this work, particularly when it comes to ensuring that coordination arrangements and capability are in place to manage complex or high profile missing children cases.