

Pre-deployment process for online child sexual abuse and indecent images of children (IIOC) investigations

A pre-deployment process to prepare officers and staff for investigations into online child sexual abuse (CSA) and IIOC material.

First published

30 July 2025

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Child abuse Investigation Training and professional development
Organisation	Leicestershire Police
Region	East Midlands
Partners	Police
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	January 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	General public Workforce

Aim

The pre-deployment process aims to ensure that officers and staff are prepared for working within the Artemis department (responsible for investigations involving online child sexual abuse and exploitation).

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of this practice are to:

- reduce occurrences of allocating individuals into roles they are not able to undertake
- reduce the impact of trauma on individuals
- improve workforce wellbeing by conducting regular check-ins

Description

Artemis is a specialist department within Leicestershire Police that investigates IIOC offences. Investigators must undertake the viewing and grading of IIOC as part of their work, which is recognised as a traumatic yet unavoidable requirement.

The process for moving an individual into the department was mapped, exposing the time, effort and costs that can be involved. If an individual is moved into Artemis and subsequently is unable to work with IIOC, then the move process and cost is repeated, causing significant disruption for several people.

As a result, a pre-deployment process has been created for those individuals who have been selected to join the department. The pre-deployment process consists of:

- the individual nominates the department as a preference to be transferred
- the resource move is agreed in principle with resource planners, human resources (HR) and senior management
- the individual attends an IIOC controlled exposure experience, delivered by an in-house image grading trained officer. The individual is exposed to a small selection of images from the range of grading categories
- written feedback is obtained from the individual by the trainer via a questionnaire after the controlled exposure. The trainer then reviews the feedback and should any concerns be raised,

they update the department head for a secondary review. The individual can state during this feedback or at any point that they do not wish to continue with their transfer due to the trauma either caused or expected by the viewing of IIOC

- if an individual does not feel emotionally able to undertake work involving IIOC after the controlled exposure, the move will be cancelled, and an alternative individual will be identified through resource planning and HR
- the individual can attend an attachment within the department to gain experience and exposure to processes and daily business that expands their understanding of the role. This includes their involvement in attending warrants, custody and interview procedures along with digital exhibit handling and examination

This process takes place at any time between the move being agreed in principle and the start date. The earlier the process can be completed, the less impact this has on finding an alternative resource and creating a situation whereby an alternative candidate cannot start by the required date. The individual does not have to be vetted for this process as they are not handling any material or using any systems.

The feedback questionnaire was created by the force's image grading trainers to capture the individual's feelings, reservations, relevancy, support proposals and willingness to progress to the image grading training course. It is a qualitative product and no scoring is assigned. Instead, it is an opportunity for the individual to reflect on their exposure to IIOC and suitability to complete future training and work in the department. Leicestershire Police do not mandate moves into the Artemis department. Therefore, even if the individual progresses through the pre-deployment process, they can still decline to move by notifying the Artemis department head with their rationale.

During the controlled exposure, officers are reminded of the organisation's wellbeing provision. Once individuals begin within the department, they are continually supported through an enhanced wellbeing plan. This plan intends to provide continual support and identify the individual's ability/desire to continue within the department. The following resources are available as part of the wellbeing plan:

- health assured
- force's wellbeing website

- clinical supervisions (six monthly or when a need is identified)
- occupational health unit referral
- stress risk assessment
- local wellbeing walks around force headquarters and nearby leisure facilities
- memorial garden for quiet reflection
- trauma risk management (TRiM) through a trained TRiM Ambassador
- first line supervisory welfare discussions
- peer support
- force inclusive networks
- wellness recovery action plan (WRAP)
- wellbeing rooms located across the force area
- workload management discussions with first line supervisory
- the national police wellbeing service ([Oscar Kilo](#))

At any stage of their deployment, a member of the Artemis team can declare that, for wellbeing purposes, they are no longer able to undertake their role. At this point they will be immediately removed from viewing IIOC and their first line supervisor will risk assess their ongoing welfare and demands, implementing supportive adjustments. The Artemis detective inspector will discuss redeployment through existing establishment processes. Leicestershire Police will not force any member of the organisation to view IIOC and there will be no adverse career-related impact on the team member who makes this decision.

The process was formalised within the Artemis standard operating procedure which was ratified at the chief officer level. Chief officer support was secured without challenge as the pre-deployment process aligned with the organisation's wellbeing agenda, HR policies and the Code of Ethics. It also mitigated the requirement for double administration and all at no cost to the organisation.

The department detective inspector reviews the process on an annual basis with the force image grading trainers who deliver the controlled exposures. The review consists of a meeting to discuss everyone who has gone through the process in the past twelve months, identifying any issues with delivery or feedback, with the aim of identifying opportunities for improvement. The review forms part of the annual review of the Artemis standard operating procedure, which is updated with the outcome of the process review. Any immediate concerns are raised to the detective inspector for rapid review with the image grading trainers.

Overall impact

The pre-deployment process is a preventative method to mitigate the need to redeploy an officer or member of staff, shortly after arriving at Artemis. Since it was implemented, no individuals have been moved out of the department due to trauma from IIOC exposure. Multiple people have chosen not to join the department after going through the controlled exposure process.

No unintended impacts have been identified. Image grading trainers have provided positive feedback that the process has notable benefits in the early identification of trauma, appropriate deployment of resources and preventing unnecessary harm to staff. The department's detective inspector has provided feedback that the pre-deployment process prevents unnecessary duplication of work through redeployments and supports the wellbeing of staff.

Learning

The force identified a challenge when creating the image package and questionnaire, which was completed by image grading trained officers. This was around the handling of IIOC for educational purposes and the secure digital storage of the material. Image grading trainers used material provided by the College of Policing to finalise an appropriate package, which was stored on an encrypted server with restricted access to the trainers only.

Forces considering the implementation of this process are advised to consider their internal resource deployment processes and seek to understand the requirements of moving a resource and the efforts of having to duplicate it, as this is a key efficiency that results from the pre-deployment process. Furthermore, when proposing to introduce the process, linking it to the organisation's wellbeing plans and evidencing the impact of trauma caused by exposure to IIOC provides significant justification.

Copyright

The copyright in this shared practice example is not owned or managed by the College of Policing and is therefore not available for re-use under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence. You will need to seek permission from the copyright owner to reproduce their works.

Legal disclaimer

Disclaimer: The views, information or opinions expressed in this shared practice example are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or views of the College of Policing or the organisations involved.