

# Police receive approximately 100 referrals relating to child sexual abuse in football.



Police Scotland Chief Constable Phil Gormley yesterday gave an update on reports to Police Scotland of non recent child sexual abuse in football at the SPA Board meeting,

He said: “As you will have seen from the extensive media reporting, the police service across the UK is responding to reports of child sexual abuse in football.

“Police Scotland is also responding to this situation. We have begun a major investigation to ensure our response is as co-ordinated, professional and as victim-focused as possible. We are working closely with our law enforcement partners through the auspices of UK policing’s umbrella co-ordinating activity, Operation Hydrant. Each Local Police Commander has been provided with a briefing to discuss the issue with chief officer groups and local Child Protection Committees.

“We will continue to work with partners, including the National Police Chief’s Council through Operation Hydrant, the Scottish Football Association and the NSPCC to ensure a coordinated policing response is in place.

“A notification process has been agreed with the NSPCC whereby all referrals relating to Scotland will be routed to a Single Point of Coordination within the National Child Abuse Investigation Unit. In addition, other avenues are available for members of the public to make a report, or provide information by attending at their local police station, or

telephoning the Police Scotland contact number 101.

“To date, we have received approximately 100 referrals which relate to child sexual abuse in football.

“Specialist, highly-trained officers from the National Child Abuse Investigation Unit and public protection teams across the country are assessing the information coming to us and determining the most appropriate response. This work is co-ordinated at a UK level because in many instances, reports relate to incidents involving more than one police force area. The protection of children is a cornerstone of our service and should be a concern for all. This is a fast-moving and fluid situation which requires both sensitive policing and strong partnership working with advocacy services and other statutory agencies.

“We recognise that speaking out about any form of child abuse is incredibly difficult and disclosures are often made months or years afterwards. We appreciate that sometimes finding a safe place to first talk about the experience helps eventual disclosure and would encourage anybody who feels this would assist to contact a support organisation.

“Individuals who disclose will be heard, they can be confident of the response they will receive, we will take all necessary steps to ensure support is there and that those responsible for such crime will be the subject of rigorous investigation.

“Strong partnership working is critical. We are all committed to ensuring every person who has disclosed abuse can receive timely advocacy and support, tailored to their individual needs. While capacity may be tested over the coming weeks and months, I am confident that the strong partnerships built up over many years will ensure that we continue to provide a holistic service that meets the needs of children and adults who have been abuse in childhood.”

The NSPCC’s football abuse helpline can be contacted 24 hours

a day on 0800 023 2642.