

Reports of online child sexual abuse increases by 5.9% during last year

Reports of online child sexual abuse increased during the last year, information released today by Police Scotland shows.

Police Scotland's 2020-21 Quarter 4 Performance Report and Management Information showed there were a total of 1,966 child sexual abuse crimes recorded during the year, an increase of 5.9% compared to last year (1,857) and 24.9% greater than the five year average of 1,574.



The Performance Report outlines the safeguarding of 434 children through the enforcement of 649 National Online Child Abuse Prevention (NOCAP) packages between September 2020 and March this year.

NOCAP packages provide intelligence and evidence which underpins investigations carried out to identify and arrest online child abusers.

Deputy Chief Constable Fiona Taylor said: "The rise in reports online child sexual abuse has continued and accelerated during this period, and the Performance Report draws attention to vital work to safeguard hundreds of children through the enforcement of National Online Child Abuse Prevention (NOCAP) packages.

"Online child sexual abuse is a national threat and tackling it is a priority for Police Scotland. The implementation of

our Cyber Strategy will ensure we continue to build capacity and capability to keep people safe in the virtual space.”

The reports also provide an insight into the effect of coronavirus restrictions on the policing needs and requirements of communities during 2020-21.

Crime reports fell overall, with 6,361 fewer violent crimes reported compared to the previous year, a decrease of 10% while there were also 55 fewer road fatalities, decreasing 33% from 165 to 110.

Acquisitive crime, such as housebreakings and shoplifting, fell by 18% year on year (from 109,460 to 89,731).

Detection rates increased in a number of crime categories where reported offences had decreased, including overall violent crime (up 3.3% points) and acquisitive crime (up 0.3% points).

However reported frauds increased by 38.2% from 10,875 in 2019-20 to 15,031 during the last year, up 78.1% on the five-year average of 8,439 reported crimes.

DCC Taylor said: “The reporting year 2020-21 was truly an exceptional period, covering from just a few days after the country first entered lockdown up until the beginning of April 2021.

“While it may be years before some of the changes to how people live their lives and to the nature of crime are fully understood, this information demonstrates the significant impact coronavirus restrictions have had on reported crime, detection rates and other policing requirements during this unique time.

“Overall violent crime reduced by around 10% year on year. Year on year increases of violent crime were reported during only the months of July and August, when restrictions had been

eased.

“Acquisitive crime, such as shoplifting, also declined overall by almost a fifth compared to the year before and against the five-year average.

“The number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads is down about a third on the year before.”

“While this is to be welcomed, it is important to note reductions in reported crime did not occur in every category.

“As restrictions ease, we will continue to report on changes to the policing requirements of communities and the challenge of maintaining higher detection rates in the context of reported crime which is closer to pre-pandemic levels, as well increasing demand in areas such as fraud and online child abuse.”

The 2020-21 Q4 Performance Report will be presented to the Scottish Police Authority’s Policing Performance Committee on Tuesday, 8 June.