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AI Tools Rolled Out to Police Forces Investigating Grooming Gangs in England and Wales

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Police forces across England and Wales will now be equipped with advanced AI tools to speed up investigations into grooming gangs, including cold cases involving child sexual exploitation. The move marks a significant development in tackling these complex and disturbing crimes.

The rollout follows a £426,000 investment into the Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) programme, which supports police in probing serious offences such as child sexual abuse, county lines drug networks, and modern slavery. As part of this expansion, all forces will gain access to new digital tools designed to process and analyse vast amounts of evidence more efficiently.

These AI systems are already in use across 13 police forces, reportedly saving over £20 million and freeing up around 16,000 hours of investigation time. The tools can translate extensive volumes of foreign language texts, including those recovered from seized mobile devices, and scan through digital data to identify patterns and connections between suspects. This capability is especially critical in cases where potential offenders and victims span multiple regions or operate under organised networks.

The update comes as authorities prepare to re-examine more than 1,200 previously closed cases linked to grooming gangs. The decision to revisit these files follows recommendations made by Baroness Louise Casey, who called for a nationwide review and improvements to police systems to better protect children.

The deployment of AI technology is intended to support that recommendation by enhancing how evidence is processed, ultimately strengthening the chances of delivering justice. The tools are expected to help officers pick up missed leads, trace relationships among offenders, and build stronger cases for prosecution.

In a public statement, Safeguarding Minister Jess Phillips described child sexual exploitation by grooming gangs as “one of the most horrific crimes,” adding, “We must punish perpetrators, provide justice for victims and survivors, and protect today’s children from harm.”

She further noted, “Baroness Casey flagged the need to upgrade police information systems to improve investigations and safeguard children at risk. Today we are investing in these critical tools.”

The TOEX programme was originally launched to aid police in dismantling organised criminal activity and is part of a broader strategy to improve how law enforcement agencies handle complex and sensitive investigations. With this latest funding boost, the programme will now focus more heavily on enabling data-led policing methods.

This rollout also comes amid long-standing concerns about the handling of grooming gang cases and the ability of police to respond quickly and effectively. By enhancing technological support, authorities hope to accelerate investigations and avoid the delays and oversights that have affected some previous cases.

Police leaders and government officials have acknowledged the importance of using innovative solutions to support frontline officers who are often overwhelmed with the scale and sensitivity of these investigations. The use of AI is seen as a step towards modernising the tools at their disposal while reinforcing the commitment to holding offenders accountable and improving outcomes for victims.

While AI tools are not a replacement for traditional investigative work, they are expected to significantly enhance how digital evidence is gathered and used, especially in cold cases where information may be fragmented or buried within complex data sets.