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Ananova :

Police identify 18 Wonderland victims

Eighteen children featured in photographs circulated by the notorious Wonderland Club paedophile ring have so far been identified.

Nearly a year after seven men were jailed for their part in Wonderland, the hunt for more than 1,000 remaining lost children goes on.

The National Crime Squad (NCS), which smashed Wonderland, is launching a high-tech £500,000 pilot project based on facial mapping which it hopes will identify more of the victims.

Detective Superintendent Peter Spindler said: "Our operational priority was always to protect children from abuse and we undertook to use the material seized to further this aim."

Following Operation Cathedral, which uncovered Wonderland in 1998, detectives seized a staggering 750,000 images of abuse.

In a pilot scheme aimed at identifying victims, pictures were sanitised and albums produced with more than 1,200 clearly identifiable children's faces. These were distributed to all UK police forces and also made available to international forces through Interpol.

"To date we have only been able to make 18 positive identifications," Mr Spindler said in a report to the NCS Service Authority.

"The multi-agency pilot project involved Child Protection Teams, Social Services and education departments but was found to be very labour intensive and time consuming.

"Valuable resources were diverted from direct child protection activity by the high number of 'false positive' identifications."

NCS, which has been internationally acclaimed for its efforts in identifying victims, has responded with a high-tech solution. Its new weapon is a "facial mapping" system which will help to identify victims.

Story filed: 11:30 Wednesday 16th January 2002

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