

## HMIC National Child Protection Inspection Programme

### Assessment Criteria

Column 1 indicates the stage in the **child's journey** from first concern to ending involvement with the police service.

**The indicators in column 2 are those things that matter most and from which everything else flows.**

In column 3, **what we might expect to see**, examples of what the indicators might mean in practice are offered

The **overall assessment** (first on schedule but last to be completed) is an assessment of how well the service has done in its totality and should be outcome and child experience focussed. There may be cases of good practice which fall short of policy and guidance expectations or cases of poor practice which conform to them. The fit between practice quality and the service's policies and guidance is indicative of how well policies and guidance serve to promote good outcomes for children.

The schedule is amenable to simple yes/no scoring, a (1-5) scale or written evidence only with no scores.

<u>The overall effectiveness of the force and its response to children who need help and protection.</u>		
<b>Child's journey</b>	<b>Overall assessment</b>	<b>What might we expect to see.</b>
The whole journey	The police force does the best it can for children and young people. Children and young people are helped, protected, listened to and their needs met.	<p>This top line assessment should be completed after the information from all the other indicators below has been collated and assessed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The force has protected the child, addressed needs as they arose and listened to the child through-out the process.</li> <li>• Intervention was proportionate and undertaken at a pace and intensity that reflected the child's individual circumstances and needs.</li> <li>• Good quality evidence and information was obtained.</li> <li>• Staff felt supported when acting in the best interests of the child.</li> <li>• They had the skills and experience required to undertake the tasks</li> </ul>

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		<p>required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Force structures, work schedule, policy and guidance supported good practice.</li> <li>The force ensures the help and protection for children and young people is considered across the whole range of activities its undertakes, in particular within the responses for domestic abuse, managing sexual and violent offenders and missing children.</li> </ul>
<u>The experiences, progress and outcomes for children who need help and protection</u>		
<p>Children and young people who are, or who are likely to be, at risk of harm or who are the subject of concern are identified and protected. Help is provided early in the emergence of a problem and is well coordinated and recorded through multi-agency arrangements. Thresholds between early help and statutory child protection work are appropriate, understood and operate effectively. Records of action and decision are clear and up to date. Children and young people are listened to and heard. Police officers and police staff members provide timely and effective help and protection. Risk is well understood, managed and regularly reviewed. Children and young people experience timely and effective multi-agency help and protection through timely and thorough action, information exchange, risk-based assessment, authoritative practice, planning and evaluation.</p>		
<b>Steps</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	
1 Initial contact	(From the first point of contact) officers and staff are alert to and identify children at risk of harm, children and young people are protected from harm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The response is timely based on level of risk and needs of the child.</li> <li>Officers and staff observe, listen to and are alert to the needs of the child. The response to risks and needs is proportionate to the circumstances and any residual concerns are addressed later but promptly.</li> <li>Where a child is evidently in danger or the act of intervening, of itself, poses a risk to the child, immediate steps should be taken to protect the child followed by a more informed assessment.</li> <li>Immediate needs such as that for medical care, reuniting with a parent or reassurance are attended to.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When dilemmas and conflicts are balanced and managed on the spot and under stress, decisions are reviewed as soon as time allows and every effort is made to minimise any negative impacts. For example by alerting more senior staff to unaddressed needs, taking an early opportunity to speak and re-engage with the child, seek additional support from another service.</li> <li>• All staff know what to do when they are concerned about a child.</li> <li>• All staff likely to come into contact with children whatever their role are appropriately trained to identify risk and make initial enquiries.</li> <li>• There are simple reliable systems for raising concerns and protecting children including for children at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking and children missing from home/ education.</li> <li>• Management support and structuring of work enables concerns to be adequately addressed in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Access to more specialist advice (for the officer or the manager) is readily accessible when needed.</li> </ul>
<p>2 Assessment and help</p>	<p>The police service works together with others to help and protect children. Help is effective and makes a positive difference to the lives of those children and families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessments include a clear analysis of risk and protective factors, use all the available information and involve all relevant agencies.</li> <li>• Assessments and plans take account of the case history including other significant events and changing levels of patterns of behaviour/ risk.</li> <li>• Assessments and plans are informed by research and learning.</li> <li>• Plans include what help is to be provided and by whom, how risk will be managed and contingency arrangements (such as a domestic abuse defendant breaching bail).</li> <li>• Help is proportionate, appropriate and timely and focuses on outcomes <i>for the child</i>.</li> <li>• Children's views and experience inform the plans which are responsive to the child/ family's age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity. Language, race and sexual orientation.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies work together and ensure responsibility for protecting a child and meeting need, information sharing is timely, specific and effective.</li> <li>• The work is co-ordinated to prevent the child becoming subject to a number of agency processes and assessments or falling through the gaps.</li> <li>• Plans specify who will do what and within what timescales, how progress will be monitored and reviewed.</li> <li>• Plans are prepared and shared with children and families. They know what help they can expect from agencies and what measures agencies will take to protect the child.</li> <li>• Plans are regularly reviewed and amended.</li> <li>• Officers and staff remain alert to needs and risks. They review and take action when new circumstances come to light.</li> <li>• Changes in circumstances are responded to quickly and risk reassessed. Officers and staff complete enforcement activity and meet contingency plan obligations promptly.</li> <li>• Work structures and shift patterns are designed to ensure the right people (decision makers) attend meetings and delays are minimised.</li> <li>• The service has alert systems in place to ensure any breach or a change in level of risk will be noted and acted upon.</li> <li>• Assessment tools are evidence based and appropriate training on their use is provided.</li> <li>• Time and opportunity for thinking and review are built into guidance and procedures. Staff are supported in their reviewing role i.e. prior to inter-agency reviews, in agency reviews are undertaken, reports (where appropriate) are written and submitted sufficiently in advance to be useful to those attending the reviews. Relevant staff attend who are empowered to make decisions on behalf of the service.</li> </ul>
3 Investigation/enquiries	Investigations are thorough,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigations and inquiries are undertaken promptly and are thorough.</li> </ul>

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	<p>timely and the needs of children are central.</p>	<p>The right information is collected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enquiries are well planned and avoid repeat examinations or interviews.</li> <li>• From the outset, the right support for the child from the most appropriate source (police, family or other agencies) is put in place.</li> <li>• Officers and staff work at the child's pace and in a way that takes account of their age and development or any special needs they might have.</li> <li>• Where children or others are limited by reason of age, health or ability in what evidence they can provide, every effort is made to find and use the appropriate specialist resources that can support the investigation (e.g. interpreters, intermediaries, trusted mental health professionals).</li> <li>• Police interview schedules, recordings, forensic findings and other evidence are proportionate, comprehensive and accurate and are collated in such a way as to enable sound and prompt judgements or recommendations to be made about next steps (bail/ remand, prosecution, child protection plans, closure etc.).</li> <li>• Potential negative impacts of any investigation are assessed and plans made to mitigate these.</li> <li>• Where another agency has to be involved this transition is handled in a way that supports and reassures the child.</li> <li>• Staff are highly skilled in interviewing children, understanding evidential limitations and creative in developing investigatory approaches that can support the investigation.</li> <li>• Agency policy and guidance enables staff to take accountable decisions, even out with agency policy, when this is in the best interests of the child.</li> <li>• Management support staff in their balancing role and revise plans and directions in the light of how the case is progressing.</li> <li>• Management ensure all staff working with young victims of offending have the appropriate knowledge and skills (child development and its many variations, expertise in communicating with children and working</li> </ul>
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		<p>with families who may be both distressed and under suspicion, good investigative practice in this area of work and knowledge of the role of other agencies and potential support systems). There is access to specialist or supplementary advice when this is needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The force understands the level of need it has for support services (interpreters, intermediaries, access to mental health professionals etc.) and has arrangements in place so that these can be called upon quickly.</li> <li>• The force helps other professionals such as paediatricians understand the need for both good forensic evidence and meeting the health needs of the child.</li> <li>• The staffing and structure of all aspects of investigation (including DNA or computer analysis) can be summonsed promptly.</li> <li>• The culture of the force enables officers to recognise and acknowledge their limitations (especially in unusual or infrequent types of case). These concerns are addressed and significant cases are reviewed to aid learning.</li> <li>• The quality of police investigative work is audited.</li> </ul>
4 Decision making	Decisions are child centred, prioritise their needs and based on good quality evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decisions are based on good quality evidence, supported by thorough investigations and the use of specialist services when needed.</li> <li>• Children are listened to and understood and their views are taken into account in all decision making.</li> <li>• Decisions reflect the likely impact on the child and where there is a risk of harm, plans are put in place to mitigate it.</li> <li>• Where there are no criminal proceedings but a child is deemed to be at risk and referred to Child Social Care, relevant information will be passed on and investigating officers will work jointly with other agencies on a child protection plan where this is appropriate.</li> <li>• In serious (alleged) criminal cases, decisions to take no further action or not to charge are appropriately reviewed by senior officers with further</li> </ul>

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		<p>investigations or support for the child strengthened where appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All decisions are undertaken by suitably qualified staff and/ or managers, as appropriate and the decisions and their reasoning are recorded.</li> </ul>
5 Trusted adult	Officers and staff do what they say they will do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers and staff do not overpromise and do not lie to children to gain evidence or persuade them to co-operate.</li> <li>• At all times they are trustworthy adults in the child's life who do what they say they will do or explain (promptly, and appropriately to the child's circumstances) why a change is necessary.</li> <li>• The agreements they make are child centred such as those relating to protecting them, keeping them informed, helping them get help etc.</li> <li>• Where officers agree to or promise certain actions in the course of their work, management should ensure that such promises can be honoured or alternative arrangements are made.</li> <li>• Work schedules, guidance and procedures should reflect the need for follow up actions and keeping victim's informed.</li> </ul>
6 Ending of involvement	Officers and staff close cases in a child centred and timely way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where a child or a family can have a reasonable expectation that they will be informed of the outcome of the case this should be timely and by the most appropriate means.</li> <li>• Where involvement is more extensive and the child has come to rely on the police force for support, consideration is given to the best way of closing contact. This may mean continuing contact for some time – a 'cool down' period or the engagement of other agencies in a support role. Ending contact should be undertaken in a way that is most appropriate for the child's circumstances and needs.</li> <li>• Contact (irrespective of its level) ends in way that encourages trust and confidence in the police service.</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police continue to contribute to inter-agency plans as appropriate (perhaps in relation to an offender) and remain alert to risk.</li> <li>• Time is allowed for a child centred approach to case closure.</li> <li>• As a service, or through the LCSB there are regular reviews of 'customer satisfaction' that include how well children are protected and needs met.</li> </ul>
7 Management of those who pose a risk to children	Officers and staff identify those who pose a risk to children and young people and work with staff from partner agencies to help and protect those and other children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police identify those who present a risk to children and young people, both convicted and un-convicted</li> <li>• Police assess the risk of harm posed to children and, together with other agencies, plan to reduce it.</li> <li>• The views of children, young people and their families are taken into account</li> <li>• Police take action to protect children from those who present a risk of harm to them</li> </ul>
8 Recording	Case recording is accurate, timely and coherent. It reflects the work undertaken, the outcomes achieved, progress against plans and the experience/ views of the child/ family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The record is completed soon after the event.</li> <li>• The author is clear and the entry is dated.</li> <li>• Where required the entry is signed off by a senior officer.</li> <li>• It conforms to agency requirements and can be readily found/ understood by all those who have access to it.</li> <li>• It is concise and accurate.</li> <li>• It differentiates between fact, judgement and opinion.</li> <li>• It reflects the purpose for which it was written.</li> <li>• It includes the child/ family's views.</li> <li>• It is shared as per agency agreements.</li> <li>• In addition to any agency retention policies, records of decisions (and the reasons for them) that significantly impact on a child's life i.e. decisions to remove a child from their parents on a permanent basis</li> </ul>

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		<p>should either be retained by the police indefinitely or explicitly forwarded to social services to for retention in the child's file.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A standard easily accessed and applied recording system has been developed for the organisation that encourages timely and accurate recording. (This might include ease of use, lack of duplication, access to computers.</li> <li>• All staff are trained in agency record keeping.</li> <li>• There are regular audits of record keeping to ensure it meets agency standards and action is taken where improvements are necessary.</li> </ul>
8 Police detention	<p>Children and young people are detained in police custody only when absolutely necessary. While in custody they are protected from harm and every effort is made to release them or transfer them to more appropriate accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial arrests are lawful (PACE 1984), proportionate and necessary.</li> <li>• Arrests are authorised by Custody Officers who understand and recognise the needs of children and make decisions taking into account their needs.</li> <li>• Arrested children and young people are provided with prompt access to appropriate adults and other persons able to support them whilst in detention.</li> <li>• Children and young people are protected from harm whilst in police detention, i.e. risk assessments, appropriate rooms, regular visits, kept away from adult detainees.</li> <li>• Post charge (or decision to release without charge), arrested children and young people, identified as needing continued detention or to be accommodated, are transferred to the care of the local authority unless it is unsafe to do so.</li> <li>• Children and young people detained under the provisions of Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 are taken to a 'place of safety' other than a police custody centre.</li> <li>• Where arrested children or young people are identified as being at risk of harm police work with partners to remove or reduce it.</li> </ul>

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### Leadership, management and governance.

Leadership, management and governance arrangements support good practice in protecting children and meeting their needs and comply with statutory guidance. There is a clear and up-to-date strategy to help and protect children and young people and an experienced workforce that meets the needs of local children and young people and families. The police senior management team have a comprehensive knowledge about what is happening at the 'front line' to enable them to discharge their responsibilities and resolve problems as they arise. They know and understand the difference police responses to help and protection are making. They oversee systematic performance management and monitoring that demonstrate rigorous and timely action in response to gaps within the force or new demands. The force works with partners to help and protect children and young people. They work together to solve inter-agency problems and to improve practice. Partnerships are supported by transparent and rigorous governance between the force, its local authority(ies) and key statutory, private and voluntary organisations. Shared priorities are clear and resourced. There is effective engagement with the relevant local partnerships including the Health and Well-being Board. The force is an active and fully contributing member of all LSCBs within its boundaries.

The leadership of the force creates an environment where children and young people are helped and protected according to their needs. Officers and staff respect children and young people and actively listen to them.

- There is leadership at a senior level demonstrated by an active interest in how well the service is meeting the needs of children and young people.
- The force (individually and in conjunction with partner agencies) understands the local population of children, young people and families and has developed approaches and services to meet need.
- It understands the experience of children and families as they move through the child protection and criminal justice systems and this is reflected in policy, guidance and procedures.
- Research and intelligence and feedback about the quality of service delivery, outcomes and the experiences of child inform the design and delivery of services.
- There is a culture of listening to children.
- The police service is equipped to address the diverse needs of all

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		<p>children with whom they come in contact irrespective of their race, gender, sexuality or abilities and have access to additional support such as interpreters where this is necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound arrangements (jointly with the LCSBs or other services e.g. mental health or drug and alcohol services) are in place to support agencies working together, including information sharing and to resolve any conflicts that might arise.</li> <li>• The LCSBs reports regularly on how well children are helped and protected.</li> <li>• The force reports regularly on its performance, its level of service and outcomes. The data gathered is actively considered and its analysis leads to changes in practice.</li> <li>• All staff, to the top of the organisation, know to whom they are accountable for practice. They review and report regularly on their performance and how well they contribute to delivering good outcomes for children and young people</li> <li>• There is a professional lead (and staff have access to professional advice).</li> <li>• Staff are supervised and supported, are competent to carry out tasks expected of them and have had induction training in child protection.</li> <li>• The force leadership takes responsibility for ensuring that all children and young people in police custody centres are fairly and properly treated.</li> <li>• The agency follow safe recruitment practices.</li> <li>• There are policies and procedures in place to deal with allegations against staff.</li> </ul>
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