



Promoting improvements
in policing to make
everyone safer

National Child Protection Inspections

Cumbria Constabulary
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Foreword

All children deserve to grow up in a safe environment, cared for and protected from harm. Most children thrive in loving families and grow to adulthood unharmed. Unfortunately, though, too many children are still abused or neglected by those responsible for their care; they sometimes need to be protected from other adults with whom they come into contact. Some of them occasionally go missing, or end up spending time in places, or with people, harmful to them.

While it is everyone's responsibility to look out for vulnerable children, police forces, working together and with other agencies, have a particular role in protecting children and making sure that, in relation to their safety, their needs are met.

Protecting children is one of the most important tasks the police undertake. Police officers investigate suspected crimes and arrest perpetrators, and they have a significant role in monitoring sex offenders. They have the powers to take a child in danger to a place of safety, and to seek restrictions on offenders' contact with children. The police service also has a significant role, working with other agencies, in ensuring children's protection and well-being in the longer term.

As they go about their daily tasks, police officers must be alert to, and identify, children who may be at risk. To protect children effectively, officers must talk to children, listen to them, and understand their fears and concerns. The police must also work well with other agencies to play their part in ensuring that, as far as possible, no child slips through the net, and to avoid both over-intrusiveness and duplication of effort.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is inspecting the child protection work of every police force in England and Wales. The reports are intended to provide information for the police, the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the public on how well children are protected and their needs are met, and to secure improvements for the future.

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1. Introduction

In July 2016, HMIC inspected Cumbria Constabulary as part of its national child protection inspection programme.¹ This report provides information on the background to the inspection and to Cumbria Constabulary; sets out the inspection findings; and makes recommendations for how the constabulary can improve the services it provides to and for children.

2. Background

The aims of HMIC's child protection inspection programme are:

- to assess how effectively police forces safeguard children at risk;
- to make recommendations to police forces for improving child protection practice;
- to highlight effective practice in child protection work; and
- to promote improvements in forces' child protection practices.

The focus of the inspection is on the outcomes for, and experiences of, children who come into contact with the police when there are concerns about their safety or well-being.

The inspection methodology comprises self-assessment and case audits carried out by the constabulary, and case audits and interviews with police officers and staff and representatives from partner agencies, conducted by HMIC.² In early 2016 following a number of high profile cases (including the death of Poppi Worthington) the then police and crime commissioner, Richard Rhodes, wrote to HMIC to request a review of the constabulary's arrangements for responding to the unexplained deaths of children. At the time several separate processes were underway to assess specifically how the constabulary responded to these tragic circumstances and HMIC concluded that we would better support the constabulary's aspiration to safeguard vulnerable children by assessing its wider child protection practice.

¹ Information on this programme is given in section 2 below.

² Details of how we conduct these inspections can be found at annex A.

3. Context for the constabulary

Cumbria Constabulary has approximately 1,750 staff. The workforce includes:

- 1,118 police officers;
- 538 police staff; and
- 85 police community support officers.³

The constabulary provides policing services to a population of around 499,000 people over an area of 4,205 square miles. This makes it geographically the fourth largest police area in England. Carlisle is the major city (and county town) in the constabulary area, and is home to a population of approximately 75,000. Other significant towns are Barrow-in-Furness (population c. 57,000) and Kendal (population c. 28,000).

There is a single county council in the Cumbria Constabulary police area which is responsible for child protection within its boundary. The constabulary has three policing divisions, known as territorial policing areas (TPAs), which cover the north, south and west of the county.

The most recent Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills judgments for the local authority are set out below.

Inspection title	Judgment	Date
Single agency inspection of local authority children’s services	inadequate	May 2015
Inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children	inadequate	June 2015
Safeguarding and looked after children inspection	inadequate	May 2012

Cumbria Constabulary’s central public protection unit (PPU) oversees safeguarding across the constabulary area and provides governance for the three public protection units (PPUs) located within the TPAs.

³ *Police workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2016*, Home Office, July 2016. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-31-march-2016

Public protection services as a whole are led by an assistant chief constable. The central PPU is led by a detective superintendent, supported by four detective chief inspectors (one for each TPA and a central position focused on policy development and partnership) who oversee the daily management of the TPA-based PPUs.

There is a single multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) for child protection, which covers the whole constabulary area.

Matters that are out of scope

HMIC did not inspect the findings or circumstances of any current or historic serious case reviews⁴ relating to Cumbria Constabulary.

⁴ A serious case review (SCR) takes place after a child dies or is seriously injured and abuse or neglect is thought to be involved. It looks at lessons that can help prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

4. The police role in child protection

Under the Children Act 1989, a police constable is responsible for taking into police protection any child who he has reasonable cause to believe would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm, and the police have a duty to inquire into that child's case.⁵ The police also have a duty under the Children Act 2004 to ensure that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.⁶

Every officer and member of police staff should understand his or her duty to protect children as part of the day-to-day business of policing. It is essential that officers going into people's homes on any policing matter recognise the needs of the children they may encounter and understand the steps they can and should take in relation to their protection. This is particularly important when they are dealing with domestic abuse or other incidents in which violence may be a factor. The duty to protect children extends to children detained in police custody.

In 2015, the National Crime Agency's strategic assessment of serious and organised crime established that child sexual exploitation (CSE) and abuse represents one of the highest serious and organised crime risks.⁷ CSE is also an important feature in The Strategic Policing Requirement.⁸

⁵ Section 46 of the Children Act 1989.

⁶ Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

⁷ *National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime*, National Crime Agency, June 2015. Available from www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk

⁸ *The Strategic Policing Requirement* was first issued in 2012 in execution of the Home Secretary's statutory duty (in accordance with section 37A of the Police Act 1996, as amended by section 77 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011) to set out the national threats at the time of writing, and the appropriate national policing capabilities needed to counter those threats. Five threats were identified: terrorism, civil emergencies, organised crime, threats to public order, and a national cyber security incident. In 2015, the Strategic Policing Requirement was reissued to include child sexual abuse as an additional national threat. See *The Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available from www.gov.uk

Expectations set out in *Working Together*

The statutory guidance *Working Together To Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*⁹ sets out the expectations of all partner organisations involved in child protection (such as the local authority, clinical commissioning groups, schools and the voluntary sector). The specific police roles set out in the guidance are:

- the identification of children who might be at risk from abuse and neglect;
- investigation of alleged offences against children;
- inter-agency working and information-sharing to protect children; and
- the use of emergency powers to protect children.

These areas of practice are the focus of our child protection inspections.

Many teams throughout police forces perform important roles in protecting children from harm, including those which analyse computers to establish whether they hold indecent images of children and those which manage registered sex offenders and dangerous people living in communities. The teams managing offenders must visit sex offenders regularly, establish the nature of risk they currently pose, and put in place any necessary measures to mitigate that risk.

To ensure that agencies co-operate to keep children safe and look after their welfare, each local authority is legally required – by the Children Act 2004 – to establish a local safeguarding children’s board (LSCB). The single LSCB in the Cumbria Constabulary area is made up of senior representatives from all agencies (including the police). Together these representatives promote safeguarding activities, ensure that the protection of children remains a high priority across their area, and hold each other to account.

⁹ *Working Together To Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, HM Government, March 2015 (latest update). Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

5. Findings: the experiences, progress and outcomes for children who need help and protection

Results of case file reviews

During the course of the inspection, Cumbria Constabulary assessed 33 cases in accordance with criteria provided by HMIC. The constabulary was asked to rate its handling of each of the 33 self-assessed cases. Practice was viewed as good by the constabulary assessors in 28 of the cases and as requiring improvement in five. In none of the cases was practice considered to be inadequate.¹⁰

HMIC also assessed these cases, rating 13 as good, 12 as requiring improvement and eight as inadequate.

Inspectors selected and examined a further 48 cases where children were identified as being at risk. Seven were assessed as good, 23 as requiring improvement and 18 as inadequate.

Figure 1: Cases assessed by both Cumbria Constabulary and HMIC inspectors

	Good	Requiring improvement	Inadequate
Constabulary assessment	28	5	0
HMIC assessment	13	12	8

Figure 2: Additional cases assessed only by HMIC inspectors

	Good	Requiring improvement	Inadequate
HMIC assessment	7	23	18

¹⁰ The case types and inspection methodology are set out in Annex A.

Initial contact

It is clear that Cumbria Constabulary has invested time in training frontline staff about their role in safeguarding, and this has translated into a better awareness and sense of responsibility.

Inspectors saw some good examples where officers responded quickly to clear and specific concerns about the immediate safety of children. Officers attended promptly, and effectively carried out preliminary tasks such as ensuring the immediate safety of children, securing evidence and making an assessment about how best to proceed. Officers undertook thorough initial enquiries and used their powers to arrest when necessary, as the following examples show.

A neighbour called to report a domestic argument. Police attended promptly and spoke to the occupants, who stated that the reason for the argument was the discovery that the 15-year-old daughter was pregnant. Officers took appropriate details and ensured that the welfare of the other children present was checked. The officers and control room conducted research to ascertain any previous police or partner agency involvement. CID and PPU were notified and attempts were made to speak with the girl (who was staying with her father). Officers also submitted a vulnerable child notification form and the matter was correctly referred to children's social services for further support to be put in place for the family.

A local shopkeeper contacted police to report that a three-year-old girl wearing just a sodden and soiled nappy, t-shirt and slippers had entered the shop alone. Police attended promptly and discovered the child in a dirty and distressed state. It became quickly apparent that she had left her home address of her own accord and crossed a busy road to get to the shop. Officers immediately attended the girl's home address and discovered her mother in a deep sleep with her partner, and a five-month-old boy. He also was wearing a nappy that was heavily soiled with urine and faeces. The house was in a poor state with inadequate food for either child. As a result the mother was arrested on suspicion of neglect and the children were left in the care of appropriate relatives.

Inspectors found staff in the constabulary's control room to be alert to risk and vulnerability, and generally knowledgeable when dealing with calls that clearly related to a child protection concern.

The constabulary has invested significant extra resources into the control room to allow for better risk assessments to be undertaken before officers attend an incident. Nonetheless, although there was some evidence that checks were routinely

completed by the constabulary control room prior to officers attending an incident, inspectors were concerned that some critical information relating to risk and vulnerability held on constabulary systems could only be accessed by PPU staff. As a consequence, there is an increased risk that frontline officers attending incidents are not adequately informed of all of the relevant and necessary information, which could be crucial to their decision making.

A regular training programme is in place to keep control room staff up-to-date with constabulary and national developments, including around child safeguarding. However, the constabulary cannot 'flag' children at risk of sexual exploitation on police systems, meaning that early opportunities to intervene could be missed. Although the constabulary intends to rectify this problem, at the time of our inspection it lacked the ability easily to identify children at risk of exploitation.

Cumbria Constabulary has invested time and resources in training frontline officers on their role in safeguarding children, and at the time of inspection had recently given constabulary-wide training for them to identify and respond more effectively to child sexual exploitation. This had translated into a better awareness and sense of responsibility among front line for child protection matters.

Inspectors found some examples where officers worked well with other agencies to protect children and ensured their needs were met, but they also found cases where vulnerable child notification forms (for a child protection concern) had not been completed when a child was at risk. As a result, opportunities to intervene and safeguard children at an earlier stage were missed. The constabulary does not have regular supervisory oversight that ensures public protection notification forms are of a good standard and routinely submitted.

The constabulary has improved its response to domestic abuse. Police usually attended incidents of domestic abuse promptly, and most staff spoken to were clear about their responsibility to record whether they had checked that children present were safe and well and whether they had ensured their immediate safety. In the majority of cases these details were recorded, although inspectors found a number in which officers had not recorded thorough assessments of the behaviour and demeanour of a child. A child's demeanour, especially in those cases where a child is too young to speak to officers, or where to do so with a parent present might present a risk, provides important information about the impact of the incident on the child. Information about this demeanour should inform both the initial assessment of the child's needs and the decision as to whether there should be a referral to children's social care services.

Inspectors also found insufficient evidence of adequate supervision and oversight of the decision-making of staff dealing with incidents involving children, meaning that in several cases the risks to children were not being identified at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendations

- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary reviews its processes to ensure that its staff can draw together all available information from police systems in order better to inform their responses and risk assessments.
- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary ensures that its officers always record their observations of a child's behaviour and demeanour in records of domestic abuse incidents so that better assessments of a child's needs are made.

Assessment and help

The single MASH is the focal point for information exchange and inter-agency planning across the constabulary area. The constabulary and its partners have invested significant time and resources in the development of the MASH and we found a clear commitment to improved joint working. We found examples of agencies working well together, identifying risks, making plans to reduce these risks and supporting children and families. However, inspectors have significant concerns about the effectiveness of the referral and assessment processes within the hub and the impact that inadequacies in these can have on the development of appropriate protective plans. Inspectors found evidence that hub staff routinely passed information to the local authority. However, in a significant number of the cases reviewed there was no record of any police involvement in the assessment of longer-term risk or the development of protective plans, and there was often no evidence of a strategy discussion or meeting taking place and no detail of what (if any) joint assessment of need had taken place. The consequence of this is that a joint plan to investigate the case and safeguard the children involved was not recorded (or developed), leaving children at risk of significant harm.

HMIC acknowledges that the constabulary has commissioned a review of its public protection structures, but the current processes have resulted in unmanaged risk and a failure effectively to assess and respond to the needs of vulnerable children at the earliest opportunity. In our case audits, inspectors found a significant number of examples where this has left children at increased risk of harm, as the following examples show.

A 15-year-old girl had been arrested on suspicion of indecent exposure to girls of a similar age. The case was investigated and appropriate bail conditions were put in place to protect the girl. An officer submitted a vulnerable child notification. Serious concerns about her welfare (she suffered from depression and tried to hang herself in February 2016) were identified and shared with the local authority. However, there was no record of a joint assessment of risk, or of a strategy discussion taking place, or of any continuing safeguarding support for the girl.

The mother of a 15-year-old girl contacted police after she discovered her daughter had been contacted by an older man attempting to entice her into sexual activity. The case was investigated; but, despite the information being shared with the local authority, there was no record of a strategy discussion taking place or of any continuing safeguarding support for the girl.

The PPUs do not have specialist child protection staff whose role it is to attend initial child protection case conferences; this responsibility rested with PPU supervisors. While inspectors acknowledge that attendance at initial conferences is high, the supervisors themselves reported that workload pressures and staff shortages meant that their ability to supervise effectively the work of investigators is limited.

The constabulary has recognised this and its current review of public protection structures is likely to lead to an increase in PPU personnel. Nonetheless, HMIC is concerned that until this process is complete, the inability of supervisors to balance meeting attendance with the management of continuing and emerging safeguarding investigations is leaving children at risk and investigators unsupported.

As mentioned above, the constabulary has provided training to all officers and staff on the identification of, and response to, child sexual exploitation. However, inspectors found that when considering a safeguarding response officers did not always display a thorough awareness of the risks associated with sexual exploitation which undermined decision making and the development of longer-term protective plans, as the following examples show.

A 15-year-old girl had received explicit messages from a 21-year-old man. The victim's phone was examined by police and the matter was investigated but there was no record of any referral being made to children's social services or of a strategy meeting taking place. While there is reference to a referral being made to an independent sexual violence advocate (ISVA), there is no record of the development of an appropriate longer-term protective plan, despite clear risk factors (the victim suffered with mental health issues and had reported previous incidents of a similar nature) that indicate a continuing risk of exploitation.

A 14-year-old girl's mother disclosed that her daughter had been in a sexual relationship with a number of men, including a 19-year-old registered sex offender. The suspect was swiftly arrested and the matter investigated, but inspectors found no evidence of a longer-term safeguarding plan to protect the girl from further exploitation. Nor was there evidence that any consideration was given to identifying the other males with whom the girl was having sex, with a view to establishing whether other offences or victims existed.

Inspectors are also concerned about the protection of some children who regularly go missing from home. We assessed eight such cases and judged three as inadequate, and three as requiring improvement. Only two very straightforward cases were found to be good. Although the initial response to locate the child is often appropriate, early intervention and long-term inter-agency planning can be ineffective.

Although TPAs have good daily oversight through the daily management and organisational risk meeting structure, and there were individual examples of the good work of staff, children can be reported missing on numerous occasions with limited evidence of early intervention. In some cases, most notably those in the care of the local authority, children were reported missing over 20 times without any recognition of wider risks and vulnerability and with little action being taken to protect them.

In the majority of cases examined, officers conducted 'safe and well' checks promptly (to check the child's immediate safety) after a missing child was located, but some records contained scant information. Inspectors found that independent return interviews¹¹ for children missing from home are available across the constabulary area, although the details of whether they were in fact conducted and what was said were not always recorded on police systems. While the constabulary reviews completed return interviews on a daily basis, inspectors could find no evidence in the cases assessed of them being used to inform the development of protective plans. Interviews with children at this stage can provide a wealth of information about the reasons why they are running away, particularly where this is becoming more frequent and the child is reluctant to speak to police or other agencies. A better

¹¹ When children are found, they must be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home. For further information see *Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care*, Department for Education, January 2014, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care_3.pdf

understanding of why a child has run away can provide vital information to partners and support more effective risk management and should inform planning and decision making about future safeguarding action.

Inspectors also found that officers do not always recognise that children who regularly go missing from home may be at risk of being groomed for sexual abuse. In six of the eight 'missing from home' cases examined by inspectors, there were signs that the children involved could be at risk of sexual exploitation. Inspectors found that the police response often focused on the most recent episode rather than taking account of information held by police about previous occurrences, as the following examples show.

A 14-year-old girl who had already been reported missing more than 20 times was reported missing again. Police records indicated a risk of sexual exploitation and that she had a history of engaging in sexual activity with multiple random people, self-harm and substance misuse dating back over 12 months. These factors were not considered during the risk assessment of this episode and she was assessed as medium risk. She was located three hours later and while there is some evidence that agencies recognised the risk of CSE there is no evidence that this is informing the development of protective plans or of efforts to reduce her vulnerability.

A 13-year-old girl was reported missing from foster care. She had been reported missing on previous occasions and had been the subject of numerous vulnerable child forms, relating to her mother's alcoholism and domestic abuse, dating back to the time she was eight. She was known to have previously accessed pornography on the internet and inquiries revealed that a girl matching her description had been picked up from her address and dropped off at the house of an older man. The initial police response was positive and the girl was located in a park (where she said she had slept) in the early hours of the morning. However, no enquiries were undertaken at the address of the older man and, while some multi-agency work had taken place related to her mother's alcoholism, there was no recognition that potentially the girl was at risk of CSE nor that this would be considered as part of a plan to deal with longer-term problems.

Inspectors found that, although recording of the details were inconsistent, immediate safeguarding measures were put in place for children who were living in families at high risk of domestic abuse. Cumbria Constabulary refers domestic abuse cases assessed as 'high risk' to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) for longer-term safeguarding plans to be put in place.

Inspectors examined minutes of MARACs and assessed eight cases involving children. MARACs were well attended by representatives from the constabulary and a wide range of agencies. Information was routinely shared to protect both victims of domestic abuse and any children affected by it. However, inspectors were concerned to find that domestic abuse cases assessed as standard risk (lower risk) were not being reviewed by specialists before closure to identify escalating or cumulative risk. This meant that children who are repeatedly witnessing domestic abuse are not being identified or referred on to MARAC at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, the threshold for cases to be referred to MARAC is inconsistent and in those cases that are referred it is evident that strategy discussions do not always occur (or at least do not occur before the meeting). This could leave children at risk because information is not shared and joint action taken at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendations

- We recommend that Cumbria Constabulary immediately undertakes a review, together with children's social care services and other relevant agencies, to ensure that the constabulary is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities as set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. As a minimum, this should include:
 - the assessment of risk, how information is shared and the development of joint protective plans; and
 - recording on police systems decisions reached at meetings to ensure that staff are aware of all relevant developments.
- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary improves practice in cases of children who go missing from home. As a minimum, this should include:
 - improving staff awareness of their responsibilities for protecting children who are reported missing from home and, in particular, those cases where it is a regular occurrence;
 - improving staff awareness of the links between children going missing from home and the risk of sexual exploitation;
 - improving staff awareness of the significance of drawing together all available information from police systems, including information about people who pose a risk to children, better to inform risk assessments;
 - ensuring that staff are aware of the need to pass this information from police systems, including information about people who pose a risk to children, on to other agencies; and
 - identifying the range of responses and actions that the police can contribute to multi-agency plans for protecting children in these cases.

Investigation

Inspectors found some good individual examples of police child protection work within the PPU, with child abuse investigators displaying a good mix of investigative and protective approaches. This ensures that the safeguarding of children remains central to their efforts while all criminal investigative opportunities are pursued. For example:

Police received a report from the grandmother of a 7-year-old boy with severe autism highlighting concerns about domestic abuse between the boy's parents. The boy's school had also reported concerns of possible physical abuse, having seen bruises on his arms and legs and cuts on his head. The boy was spoken to sensitively by officers and there was good supervision while the matter was investigated. When it became clear that there had been no abuse either to the boy or between the parents (the boy's condition often caused his arms and legs to thrash about resulting in him banging himself, and the parents were arguing as a result of the stress of raising a disabled child), there was effective joint working and long-term plans were developed with other agencies to support both the boy and his parents.

Inspectors were told by PPU staff working in all the TPAs that the work of child protection officers is difficult to manage because of high workloads. While inspectors did find some examples of good supervision, this is inconsistent because of supervisors' heavy workloads. Supervisors reported that much of their workload focused on attendance at meetings and the management of daily risk, to the detriment of supervising ongoing safeguarding investigations and providing support to staff. Inspectors found that in a number of the cases examined a lack of supervision had contributed to delays in the investigation. Staff reported difficulties in managing the expectations of victims: their capacity to provide families and children with information and guidance on what would happen next was constrained. Officers told inspectors that delays adversely affected the confidence of children and families in the police.

We also found that some serious cases – for example sexual offences – were investigated by non-specialists. The investigation of these cases was often of a poorer standard, with drift in the case and an absence of longer-term protective plans. They often failed to identify wider risks, such as the identification of other children and suspects who were a risk to other children, which was a significant concern. In the cases examined this was a recurring theme, as the following examples show.

A 12-year-old boy was alleged to have assaulted an 8-year-old boy with learning difficulties. The initial response was effective; however, the case was allocated to a probationary officer with no specialist training. While there was evidence of some supervision of the progress of the investigation, there was no evidence of any referral to children's social services for consideration of the vulnerability of either the victim or suspect. Nor was any consideration given to the wider risk the suspect might pose, or to whether there were further victims.

An 8-year-old girl alleged that she had been sexually assaulted by her mother's partner. The case was allocated to an officer from a non-specialist unit. The initial response, which was to arrest the suspect to protect the girl from further harm, was slow (the suspect was not arrested for three weeks following the initial report). Once the suspect was arrested and the victim interviewed there was no evidence of joint working with other agencies. The suspect was not considered as a possible serial offender for six months, despite being known to have access to other children (via previous partners) and explicit images of other children being discovered on his phone.

The constabulary has made efforts with the regional CPS office to improve the timeliness of decision making and the quality of case files. However, in several of the cases reviewed, delays were still apparent (although there was evidence of advice being sought by the police from the CPS earlier in the investigation to improve timeliness). When delays occur in gathering evidence and in the receipt of charging decisions from CPS (as was seen in cases in this inspection), the length of time between the first call to police or children's social care services and a criminal justice outcome can be considerable. Delays are not in the best interests of children who are unable to put the incident behind them, nor do they serve the suspect who may be on bail or in custody.

However, inspectors were pleased to see that the introduction of new prioritisation processes and investment in the capacity of the digital media investigation unit (DMIU) has significantly improved the timeliness with which computers and other electronic devices are examined.

Cumbria Constabulary has recognised the need to improve its response to tackling child sexual exploitation. It has developed a CSE problem profile, and inspectors saw evidence of some work being undertaken to improve processes to identify both victims and perpetrators. The constabulary has also led the introduction of new multi-agency processes to co-ordinate safeguarding activity.

However, inspectors were concerned to find that in several serious cases CSE risk was either not identified or not acted upon, with the consequence that opportunities

to safeguard children at the earliest opportunity were missed, sometimes repeatedly. As a result, proper safeguarding processes were not applied.

Although the constabulary has now prioritised child sexual exploitation, it has more to do fully to understand the nature and extent of CSE across the constabulary area and provide an effective response to protect children. Despite the additional training there is limited evidence at this stage that frontline staff are consistently well enough aware of how to identify effectively and respond to CSE risks and provide the proper safeguarding for those children identified as being vulnerable.

The constabulary routinely searches for evidence of children being abused or exploited online and has a dedicated unit for overseeing these investigations. Inspectors saw evidence that processes were in place to monitor these investigations centrally and were pleased to see that in the majority of cases the investigations were progressed well. Safeguarding planning was evident in most of the cases reviewed. However, inspectors noted that oversight of this process was reliant on a single individual with PPU experience. If wider safeguarding planning is to be consistently implemented, the constabulary should review the resilience of this aspect of protection.

Other types of child sexual exploitation were not investigated by a dedicated team but by child abuse detectives in the PPUs or non-specialist teams (such as neighbourhood and response teams).¹² In those cases investigated by other non specialist units, monitoring and supervision was less apparent, which led to poorer investigations. Inspectors examined 15 cases involving child sexual exploitation and found seven to be inadequate while four required improvement. Signs of risk were missed, lines of enquiry were either not followed up or took too long, and there were failures to respond to information and intelligence and to pursue offenders. Poor practice was most evident in the South and West TPAs, which together accounted for all of the cases graded as inadequate.

In most of the cases assessed, the immediate safeguarding measures were adequate but there was often a failure to identify wider risks, as the following examples show, as the following examples show.

¹² A neighbourhood team is a team of police officers and police community support officers who predominantly patrol and are assigned to police a particular local community. Teams often comprise specialist officers and staff with expertise in crime prevention, community safety, licensing, restorative justice and schools liaison. Response teams are assigned to deal with emergency and priority calls.

A 15-year-old girl was referred to police by the National Society for the Protection of Children (NSPCC)¹, to whom she reported she was routinely having sex with older men, had contracted a sexually transmitted disease and was using 'legal high' intoxicants. While there is evidence of some safeguarding planning taking place, there is none of any consideration being given to identifying and locating the men named as having sex with the girl – despite some of these men having previous convictions for sexual offences linked to children. Constabulary records show that the girl was spoken to by police when she alleged further serious sexual assaults, but no record could be found that one of the two named suspects had ever been spoken to by police.

Recommendations

- We recommend that Cumbria Constabulary immediately improves its child sexual exploitation investigations, paying particular attention to:
 - improving staff awareness, knowledge and skills in this area of work;
 - ensuring a prompt response to any concern raised;
 - undertaking risk assessments that consider the totality of a child's circumstances and risks to other children; and
 - improving the oversight and management of cases (to include auditing of child abuse and exploitation investigations to ensure that standards are being met).
- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary improves its child protection investigations, by ensuring that, as a minimum:
 - every referral received by the police is allocated to a team with the skills, capacity and competence to undertake the investigation;
 - investigations are supervised and monitored and, at each check, the supervisor reviews the evidence and any further enquiries or evidence gathering that may need to be done; and
 - until such time as these changes are part of routine practice, the constabulary should conduct regular reviews of practice that include the quality and timeliness of investigations.

Decision-making

When the case was clearly defined as a child protection matter from the outset, the police response was generally appropriate, and there were examples of effective decision-making to protect children. When there were significant concerns about the safety of children, such as parents leaving children home alone or being drunk while looking after them, officers handled incidents well, using their powers appropriately to remove children from harm's way. It is a very serious step to remove a child from their family by way of police protection.¹³ In the cases examined, decisions to take a child to a place of safety were well considered and in the best interests of the child.

With the exception of cases involving children at risk of sexual exploitation and missing from home, there was evidence that frontline staff made effective decisions in the early stages of child protection matters. Inspectors found a good level of understanding among frontline staff of the need to record and report information that had come to their attention when attending an incident involving concern for a child. Many staff spoken to by inspectors described the increasing emphasis placed by the constabulary on safeguarding children being 'everyone's business'. However, inspectors also found that this understanding had not yet resulted in consistent improvements in recording practice.

While there were examples of officers taking appropriate protective action, inspectors were concerned about the poor standard of recording on police systems across the constabulary. Accurate and timely recording of information is essential for good decision making in child protection matters. In the cases seen inspectors found that information, particularly in relation to strategy meetings, safeguarding plans and contact with children and families, was frequently incomplete or missing entirely. In those cases where information relating to risk was recorded this was frequently on PPU-only screens, to which most staff do not have access.

Cumbria Constabulary has several IT systems on which information relating to child protection is recorded. This is inefficient. It results in duplication and confusion for officers about how to locate the most recent details of an investigation. As a result, it was not always clear what decisions had been made to protect a child or what actions were within the criminal investigation. Accurate, timely and consistent recording of information on a single system would better support decision making.

Cumbria Constabulary has invested significant thought and resources in the development of a comprehensive service improvement framework. The newly created business improvement unit and the bi-weekly 'quality counts' meetings audit

¹³ Section 46(1) of the Children Act 1989 empowers a police officer, who has reasonable cause to believe that a child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm, to (a) remove the child to suitable accommodation and keep him/her there, or (b) take such steps as are reasonable to ensure that the child's removal from any hospital, or other place, in which he/she is then being accommodated is prevented.

the quality of the constabulary's response to particular incidents and areas of risk (such as CSE or those who go missing). This is positive and inspectors saw evidence of these processes prompting tangible changes to organisational practices. Inspectors also found evidence that constabulary managers use the business improvement unit performance information to understand some areas of work and demand in their units. However, these processes are reactive, and routine dip-sampling and analysis of the quality of longer term safeguarding planning and decision making is under-developed. HMIC acknowledges that this unit is newly established and that the constabulary recognises that more can (and will) be done to enhance and refine its quality assurance and service provision processes.

As mentioned previously, inspectors found consistently good practice across the constabulary in relation to the management of risk on a daily basis for immediate and urgent child protection matters. This includes matters relating to children detained in custody suites. In particular, inspectors consider the daily management and organisational risk meeting structure to be effective and supported good decision making.

Recommendation

- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary takes steps to ensure that all relevant information is properly recorded and is readily accessible in all cases where there are concerns about the welfare of children. Guidance to staff should include:
 - what information should be recorded (and in what form) on systems to enable good quality decisions;
 - the importance of sending the information to the correct police department and/or relevant partner agency; and
 - the importance of ensuring that records are made promptly and kept up to date.

Trusted adult

In some cases, though not all, it was clear that when the concern was serious and immediately recognised as a child protection matter, officers carefully considered the approach to the child or parents and explored the best ways to engage with the child. This sensitive approach resulted in stronger relationships between the child and police, as the following examples show.

In relation to a call to a domestic incident involving 9 and 15-year-old siblings. Officers attended the argument between the parents of the siblings and spoke at length to each of the children to make an assessment about their welfare and ascertain their thoughts and feelings about the incident and possible police action. Throughout the investigation, the views of the child were recorded and considered in decisions taken. While police did arrest the children's father (contrary to their wishes), they spoke to the children about this sensitively and explained the reasons for it

A referral was received from a school alleging that a 13-year-old girl had been sexually assaulted by her grandfather over a prolonged period. A joint visit was made to the girl by police and children's social care services. The girl was spoken to and safeguarding actions were agreed. Throughout the case there was continued support from children's social care services and the girl's school, which arranged continuing support.

Although inspectors therefore found a number of cases where the decisions reached clearly took account of the needs of children, there was very little information in the majority of case files about the views of the child, the impact of the issues in the case on the child or the outcomes of police intervention for the child.

We also found that insufficient consideration was given to children at risk of sexual exploitation and those who went missing from home. The examples referred to in previous sections of this report suggest an underdeveloped response to these cases.

Recommendation

- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary ensures that:
 - staff record the views and concerns of children;
 - staff record the outcome for the child at the end of police involvement in a case;
 - staff inform children, as appropriate, of any decisions that have been made about them; and
 - information about children's needs and views is made available, on a regular basis, for consideration by the police and crime commissioner and to service managers to inform future practice.

Managing those posing a risk to children

Cumbria Constabulary has dedicated units – management of sexual offender and violent offender teams (MOSOVO) – to manage registered sex offenders. Inspectors found that there were plans in place to manage risks; that these were proportionate and kept up to date; and that monitoring visits to check that registered sex offenders were keeping to their registration requirements were normally made at the appropriate time.

We also found that information and intelligence were handled appropriately, although in the cases reviewed the approach was often offender-focused, with too little consideration given to longer-term safeguarding support for identified children. The units were dealing with a caseload that inspectors considered to be reasonable with most staff managing between 50 to 60 offenders each.

The unit was resourced appropriately and staff working in the teams were clear about their responsibilities, undertook relevant enquires, assessed risk and took action to reduce it. Officers are trained in the use of the Active Risk Management System (ARMS).¹⁴ Inspectors were pleased to note that at the time of the inspection 88 percent of offenders had been the subject of an ARMS assessment and these assessments were being used proactively to monitor and reduce risk. Inspectors

¹⁴ ARMS is a structured assessment process to assess dynamic risk factors known to be associated with sexual re-offending, and protective factors known to be associated with reduced offending. It is intended to provide police and probation services with information to plan management of convicted sex offenders in the community.

found that officers used their powers to arrest those who failed to keep to their registration conditions (although some delays were apparent) or other requirements, such as prohibitions on contact with children. For example:

Police received information that a registered sex offender was in the company of children. Officers conducted prompt enquiries and identified the children. A thorough investigation was conducted. Appropriate safeguarding measures were put in place by supervisors, and joint visits to each child and family were undertaken with children's social care services. The offender was arrested, charged and imprisoned.

Staff from the sex offender management unit attended daily management meetings forums and shared information about offenders who posed a risk. Frontline staff spoken to were positive about the information received from this unit about those who pose a risk in the community. We found links between the dangerous offender units and neighbourhood policing teams to be consistently good across the constabulary area. Officers were made aware of registered sex offenders living in their area through regular intelligence updates that provided information about those who posed a risk to children.

Multi-agency public protection meetings to develop and oversee risk reduction plans for registered sex offenders were generally well-conducted and well attended by agencies. Risks to children were identified, plans were put in place and (as above) neighbourhood officers were alerted to specific sex offenders living in their area.

Recognising the need for better arrangements to deal with child sexual exploitation (CSE), the constabulary had taken steps to review its processes and resourcing aligned with public protection. Nevertheless, at the time of the inspection, we found that there were too few staff with specialist knowledge and good understanding of disruption tactics to identify and deter perpetrators. The constabulary had made some progress and inspectors found some good, but isolated, cases of officers working to prevent the risk posed by perpetrators. The constabulary had recently developed an assessment and problem profile to identify children who may be at risk of sexual exploitation and perpetrators who may pose a risk to them. However, the current constabulary IT systems do not support the development of this work, meaning that victims and perpetrators of CSE are not readily identifiable. Therefore while intelligence gathering and tactics to improve enforcement and disrupt offenders had shown some improvement in the months leading up to the inspection, the constabulary still had much to do to understand and tackle child sexual exploitation effectively within its communities.

Recommendation

- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary improves its identification, disruption and prosecution of those involved in CSE.

Police detention

If a child is to be denied bail and detained, the local authority is responsible for providing appropriate accommodation. Only in exceptional circumstances (such as during extreme weather) would the transfer of the child to alternative accommodation not be in the child's best interests. In rare cases – for example, if a child presented a high risk of serious harm to others – secure accommodation might be needed.

Cumbria Constabulary has made an unambiguous commitment to reduce the number of children charged with a criminal offence who are denied bail and unnecessarily detained in police custody overnight.

The constabulary had provided additional training to custody staff on the conditions under which bail can be denied and the responsibility of the police and local authority to seek, and be provided with, appropriate alternative accommodation in those cases where bail is considered unsuitable.¹⁵ It was clear that this had translated to an improved awareness and sense of responsibility.

To ensure the time spent by children in police custody is kept to a minimum, the daily management meetings in each area discuss the cases where children are in custody overnight or where they have been detained during the day.

As a result of the more considered use of bail, the number of children being charged with an offence and denied bail has decreased dramatically in the last 18 months. From October 2014 to October 2015, 46 children were charged and denied bail (and so required the provision of local authority accommodation). From November 2015 to April 2016, this number had decreased to four.

In October 2015, Cumbria Constabulary and its partners agreed to establish a joint children in custody group (CICG) to oversee the provision of alternative accommodation for those children detained in police custody after charge. The group aims to safeguard children and young people by reviewing each case of a child being detained where local authority accommodation is required. This is done in order to quality assure practice and avoid (as far as is practicable) the detention of children in police custody following charge and the denial of bail. The constabulary

¹⁵ Under section 38(6) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 a custody officer must secure the move of a child to local authority accommodation unless he certifies it is impracticable to do so or, for those aged 12 or over, no secure accommodation is available and local authority accommodation would not be adequate to protect the public from serious harm from him.

has also worked with the local authority to improve the provision of appropriate alternative accommodation for children detained in police custody.

However, despite the significant progress made and a clear strategic focus on improving the service provided to children detained in custody, inspectors found that the availability of appropriate alternative accommodation remains problematic.

Inspectors examined each of the four cases of children in custody who were charged and denied bail. Two cases were judged to be inadequate; two cases required improvement; none was good. In each of the cases inspectors were pleased to see evidence of suitable alternative accommodation being considered and requested by custody staff, but were concerned to see that each request was refused by the local authority because none was available. Inspectors also noted that the decision to deny bail was not subsequently reviewed by custody staff as a result of a lack of appropriate alternative accommodation. This indicates that while significant progress has been made, a disconnect between strategic intent and operational practice remains, with the result that those (few) children who are refused bail after charge continue to be detained unnecessarily. However, HMIC acknowledges that this should be viewed in the context of very significant reductions in the number of children denied bail after charge, and the commitment of the constabulary to reducing the unnecessary detention of children.

Detention certificates, which outline to a court the reason for a custodial remand, are essential for police accountability and enable forces to monitor how well they are discharging their responsibilities under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. In all but one of the cases seen by inspectors detention certificates were completed.

Healthcare practitioners (HCPs) provided services to detainees in custody suites throughout the constabulary area 24 hours a day. The HCP discusses with the child or young person any concern he or she might have about their home and personal lives and where information is forthcoming which indicates a level of risk a child notification form is completed and submitted. The HCP also has access to medical and mental health records and this can help to safeguard children during their time in police custody.

However, inspectors were concerned to find in some of the cases reviewed that the HCP was not contacted despite clear risk indicators. For example:

A 17-year-old boy arrived in custody intoxicated having consumed a quarter-litre of vodka and three cans of strong cider. He was emotional and crying and custody staff were concerned he might harm himself. He had mental health issues for which he was receiving treatment and he had previously attempted to self harm by taking an overdose. The boy's mother told custody staff that he might have taken drugs as she believed he had a '£20 bag with him' the last

The constabulary is well served by the appropriate adult scheme, which provides children and young people with 24-hour access to support and advice from an appropriate adult.¹⁶ The scheme generally provides an appropriate adult in a timely way when contacted by custody staff, although some staff reported that out-of-hours requests could, in isolated cases, be problematic.

Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 allows a police officer to remove an apparently mentally disordered person from a public place to a place of safety. Although a place of safety can include a police custody suite, such a suite should only be used in exceptional circumstances and it is preferable for the person to be taken directly to healthcare facilities such as a hospital. Inspectors were pleased to find that in the past year no children were detained in police custody under section 136 of the Mental Health Act.

Cumbria Constabulary has improved the service it provides to children detained in police custody and dramatically reduced the number of children detained unnecessarily. Constabulary leaders have also worked with partners to improve the availability and oversight of alternative accommodation for those who are refused bail after being charged with a criminal offence. This has not yet, unfortunately, resulted in improved outcomes for the (few) children for whom bail after charge is deemed unsuitable. However, the constabulary has prioritised reducing the unnecessary detention of children and the CICG provides an opportunity to ensure that the responsibility to accommodate a child charged with an offence and refused bail is fulfilled.

¹⁶ Under section 63B of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 an appropriate adult is a parent, guardian, social worker or any responsible person over 18 year old and is not a police officer or a person employed by the police .

6. Findings: leadership, management and governance

The chief constable, his command team and the police and crime commissioner (PCC) have a strong and unambiguous commitment to child protection, which is reflected in the police and crime plan¹⁷ and constabulary priorities (known locally as the Big 6).¹⁸ We found clear evidence of work progressing at a strategic level to improve the constabulary's ability to manage the risks posed to vulnerable children and implement appropriate protective plans.

The constabulary is carrying out a review of demand including public protection resourcing; has recently completed an internal vulnerability review and developed a business improvement unit (BIU) to support its evolving quality assurance and improvement programme (more information on the work of this unit is provided on the next page). These actions demonstrate its commitment to improving child protection. However, inspectors found that the current structures and processes do not yet always support effective decision-making that is in the best interests of children. We are concerned that this has created several inconsistencies and delays in practice across the constabulary area, meaning that children are being left at risk.

This risk to children is exacerbated by a lack of resources and demand pressures within the public protection units. As mentioned above, the constabulary is undertaking a crime demand review and it is expected that as a result additional resources will be allocated to public protection. However, we could not assess whether the review would provide the constabulary with a more consistent framework to meet the needs of children effectively.

We found leadership across the service to be good, with child protection recognised as a priority within local policing unit command teams. This has had a positive impact on operational staff, and inspectors found some very good examples of officers displaying awareness of safeguarding children.

Throughout the inspection it was apparent that all of the staff spoken to who are responsible for managing child abuse investigations in public protection units are knowledgeable, committed and dedicated to providing good outcomes for children identified as being at risk of harm. All child protection staff in PPU were trained in or in the process of completing the specialist child abuse investigator development

¹⁷ The Cumbria Constabulary police and crime plan for 2016-2020 is available at: www.cumbria-pcc.gov.uk/working-for-you/police-and-crime-plan.aspx

¹⁸ The Big 6 are Cumbria Constabulary's principal priorities, which are: engage with communities and work with partners; prevent crime, road casualties and anti-social behaviour; manage calls for service; manage offenders; protect vulnerable people and communities; investigate crime and bring offenders to justice.

programme (SCAIDP), and all are either detectives or are working towards full detective status. However, inspectors were told (and were able to see in case audits) that the expanding remit of the PPU has led to delays and some drift in the development of longer-term protective plans.

Constabulary senior managers take an active role in partnership working in the constabulary area. The assistant chief constable sits on the local safeguarding children board and leads the constabulary strategic child protection governance arrangements, ensuring visible police strategic oversight and drive within the partnership. Important information and activity is then shared with divisional commanders at senior management meetings to ensure they are kept informed of areas of development, including practice and policy.

The constabulary had invested significant time and resources in the development of a business improvement unit (BIU) to support its intention to improve safeguarding practice. While this was a recent development, the team has begun to produce some regular performance and oversight information relating to child protection to support the recently-implemented constabulary-wide risk management structures. While this is a positive step, and inspectors saw evidence of the constabulary intervening in cases of high risk to ensure that the immediate response is appropriate, the current structure and supporting information is reactive and focused on the response to individual incidents. Inspectors found that information for proactively identifying unknown risk, understanding outcomes and assessing the effectiveness of decision making was under-developed (though evolving). Therefore, senior leaders did not sufficiently understand the quality of work, outcomes and demands, and the clear strategic intent to improve is not yet translating into consistently improved practice and improved outcomes for children.

The constabulary has begun to profile the nature and extent of CSE risk (both in relation to perpetrators and victims) across its area. However, the current IT systems are not best adapted to the development of this work and therefore victims and perpetrators of CSE are not readily identifiable. Inspectors found that more is required to enable the constabulary to understand better the needs of vulnerable children in order to design and build more effective future services to meet their needs. We recognise that the development of a new IT system in 2017 (RedSIGMA) is intended to address many of these issues.

A single local safeguarding children's board is in place across the constabulary area and incorporates all district authority areas. The chair and director of children's services praised the commitment of the constabulary, the strength of partnership working and the consistency and quality of representation at board level.

Inspectors found some good evidence of inter-agency work at a strategic level (for instance, in the development of an improved joint response to the detention of children), and a strong commitment to supporting partnership improvement

processes. The implementation of a dedicated multi-agency hub in the west of the county to develop bespoke multi-agency safeguarding plans for vulnerable members of the community underlines the commitment of the constabulary to improve safeguarding. However, as noted above, the effectiveness of this approach is sometimes undermined by inefficient and ineffective processes that affect safeguarding provision negatively (see page 12).

Inspectors are concerned about the protection of some children who regularly go missing from home. Intervention and long-term inter-agency planning to respond to these cases are often ineffective. We did not find much evidence of early diversionary support being considered for some children who had been reported missing a number of times. That said, TPAs have good daily oversight of children who go missing and absent, and there were individual examples of good work by officers.

7. Findings: The overall effectiveness of the constabulary and its response to children who need help and protection

Cumbria Constabulary has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving services for the protection of vulnerable people, and this is visible at all levels of the constabulary – from the chief constable to frontline staff. The chief constable and PCC have prioritised child protection and it is clear that there is a constabulary-wide focus on safeguarding and working to improve outcomes for children. Inspectors were able to see that progress is being made to improve staff awareness in relation to vulnerability and wider safeguarding issues.

Inspectors found some good individual examples of the constabulary protecting children who were most in need of help, with good multi-agency work and a child-centred approach that effectively combines investigative and safeguarding approaches. There is clear evidence of strategic leadership and direction. However, this has not yet translated into consistent improvements in outcomes for all vulnerable children. The consequence of this is that, against a background of significant improvement activity, the police are not yet consistently making effective decisions to protect children.

There remain inconsistencies in the management and oversight of investigations across the constabulary, and this has an impact on the provision of safeguarding, and ultimately leaves children vulnerable to harm. The majority of cases examined were found to be inadequate or requiring improvement. In a significant number, poor supervision and record keeping had undermined decision making and safeguarding measures. If the constabulary is to be confident that it is adequately protecting vulnerable children, safeguarding arrangements require improvement. The crime demand review provides an opportunity for services to be re-configured to match resources with demand and ensure that consistently good standards of practice are applied across the constabulary area to improve outcomes for children.

Arrangements for managing high-risk sex offenders are generally good across the constabulary, and there is sufficient capacity to allow for some proactive work. Inspectors found evidence of some good inter-agency plans to manage risk and were pleased to note that neighbourhood teams are kept well informed of the offenders living in their areas.

HMIC acknowledges that the constabulary has created a comprehensive improvement framework to monitor and work towards completion of previous recommendations, and recognises the scale of the challenge faced by the constabulary. However, the constabulary needs to do more to evolve and refine these processes in order to ensure that this positive approach is translating into better outcomes for children.

The response to children who regularly go missing from home also requires improvement, with a particular focus on early intervention and ensuring that officers and staff understand the link between children who regularly go missing and sexual exploitation.

Work to address CSE is under-developed and lacks co-ordination. While the constabulary is taking some steps to address this, it still has more to do to demonstrate that it is effectively able to identify and safeguard children at risk of sexual exploitation.

The constabulary has significantly reduced the number of children denied bail and detained in police custody after charge. This is praiseworthy but inspectors found that, despite significant work being undertaken to improve the provision of alternative local authority accommodation in those (few) cases where bail after charge was considered to be inappropriate, none of those children was transferred to the care of the local authority because no suitable accommodation was available.

It is not in the best interests of any child to be detained in a police cell under the Mental Health Act 1983. Inspectors were pleased to find that children are not routinely detained in this way and none had been so detained in the 12 months before the inspection.

In conclusion, while it is clear that there is an unambiguous commitment from senior leaders to improve outcomes for vulnerable children, and some improvements have been made, the constabulary needs to do more to improve its safeguarding practice in order adequately to protect those children at most risk of harm.

8. Recommendations

Immediately

- We recommend that Cumbria Constabulary immediately undertakes a review, together with children's social care services and other relevant agencies, to ensure that the constabulary is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities as set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. As a minimum, this should include:
 - the assessment of risk, how information is shared and the development of joint protective plans; and
 - recording on police systems decisions reached at meetings to ensure that staff are aware and of all relevant developments.
- We recommend that Cumbria Constabulary immediately improves its child sexual exploitation investigations, paying particular attention to:
 - improving staff awareness, knowledge and skills in this area of work;
 - ensuring a prompt response to any concern raised;
 - undertaking risk assessments that consider the totality of a child's circumstances and risks to other children; and
 - improving the oversight and management of cases (to include auditing of child abuse and exploitation investigations to ensure that standards are being met).

Within three months

- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary reviews its processes to ensure that its staff can draw together all available information from police systems in order better to inform their responses and risk assessments.
- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary ensures that its officers always record their observations of a child's behaviour and demeanour in records of domestic abuse incidents so that better assessments of a child's needs are made.

- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary improves practice in cases of children who go missing from home. As a minimum, this should include:
 - improving staff awareness of their responsibilities for protecting children who are reported missing from home and, in particular, those cases where it is a regular occurrence;
 - improving staff awareness of the links between children going missing from home and the risk of sexual exploitation;
 - improving staff awareness of the significance of drawing together all available information from police systems, including information about people who pose a risk to children, better to inform risk assessments;
 - ensuring that staff are aware of the need to pass this information from police systems, including information about people who pose a risk to children, on to other agencies; and
 - identifying the range of responses and actions that the police can contribute to multi-agency plans for protecting children in these cases.

- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary improves its child protection investigations, by ensuring that, as a minimum:
 - every referral received by the police is allocated to a team with the skills, capacity and competence to undertake the investigation;
 - investigations are supervised and monitored and, at each check, the supervisor reviews the evidence and any further enquiries or evidence gathering that may need to be done; and
 - until such time as these changes are part of routine practice, the constabulary should conduct regular reviews of practice that include the quality and timeliness of investigations.

- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary takes steps to ensure that all relevant information is properly recorded and is readily accessible in all cases where there are concerns about the welfare of children. Guidance to staff should include:
 - what information should be recorded (and in what form) on systems to enable good quality decisions;
 - the importance of sending the information to the correct police department and/or relevant partner agency; and

- the importance of ensuring that records are made promptly and kept up to date.
- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary ensures that:
 - staff record the views and concerns of children;
 - staff record the outcome for the child at the end of police involvement in a case;
 - staff inform children, as appropriate, of any decisions that have been made about them; and
 - information about children's needs and views is made available, on a regular basis, for consideration by the police and crime commissioner and to service managers to inform future practice.
- We recommend that, within three months, Cumbria Constabulary improves its identification, disruption and prosecution of those involved in CSE.

9. Next steps

Within six weeks of the publication of this report, HMIC will require an update of the action being taken to respond to the recommendations that should be acted upon immediately.

Cumbria Constabulary should also provide an action plan within six weeks to specify how it intends to respond to the other recommendations made in this report.

Subject to the responses received, HMIC will revisit the constabulary no later than six months after the publication of this report to assess how it is managing the implementation of all of the recommendations.

Annex A – Child protection inspection methodology

Objectives

The objectives of the inspection are:

- to assess how effectively police forces safeguard children at risk;
- to make recommendations to police forces for improving child protection practice;
- to highlight effective practice in child protection work; and
- to drive improvements in forces' child protection practices.

The expectations of agencies are set out in the statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, the latest version of which was published in March 2015. The specific police roles set out in the guidance are:

- the identification of children who might be at risk from abuse and neglect;
- investigation of alleged offences against children;
- inter-agency working and information-sharing to protect children; and
- the exercise of emergency powers to protect children.

These areas of practice are the focus of the inspection.

Inspection approach

Inspections focus on the experience of, and outcomes for, children following their journey through the child protection and criminal investigation processes. They assess how well the service has helped and protected children and investigated alleged criminal acts, taking account of, but not measuring compliance with, policies and guidance. The inspections consider how the arrangements for protecting children, and the leadership and management of the police service, contribute to and support effective practice on the ground. The team considers how well management responsibilities for child protection, as set out in the statutory guidance, have been met.

Methods

- Self-assessment – practice, and management and leadership;
- Case inspections;

- Discussions with staff from within the police and from other agencies;
- Examination of reports on significant case reviews or other serious cases; and
- Examination of service statistics, reports, policies and other relevant written materials.

The purpose of the self-assessment is to:

- raise awareness in the service about the strengths and weaknesses of current practice (this forms the basis for discussions with HMIC); and
- initiate future service improvements and establish a baseline against which to measure progress.

Self-assessment and case inspection

In consultation with police services the following areas of practice have been identified for scrutiny:

- domestic abuse;
- incidents where police officers and staff identify children in need of help and protection, e.g. children being neglected;
- information-sharing and discussions about children potentially at risk of harm;
- the exercising of powers of police protection under section 46 of the Children Act 1989 (taking children into a 'place of safety');
- the completion of section 47 Children Act 1989 enquiries, including both those of a criminal nature and those of a non-criminal nature (Section 47 enquiries are those relating to a child 'in need' rather than 'at risk');
- sex offender management;
- the management of missing children;
- CSE; and
- the detention of children in police custody.

Below is a breakdown of the type of self-assessed cases we examined in Cumbria Constabulary.

Type of case	Number of cases
Child protection enquiry (s. 47)	5
Domestic abuse	5
General concerns with a child where a referral to children's social care services was made	5
Sex offender enquiry	3
Missing children	3
Police protection	3
At risk of sexual exploitation	3
Online sexual abuse	3
Child in custody	3

Annex B – Glossary

child	person under the age of 18
multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)	locally-held meeting of statutory and voluntary agency representatives to share information about high-risk victims of domestic abuse; any agency can refer an adult or child whom they believe to be at high risk of harm; the aim of the meeting is to produce a co-ordinated action plan to increase an adult or child's safety, health and well-being; agencies that attend vary, but are likely to include the police, probation, children's, health and housing services; over 250 currently in operation across England and Wales
multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)	hub in which public sector organisations with responsibilities for the safety of vulnerable people work; it has staff from organisations such as the police and local authority social services, who work alongside one another, sharing information and co-ordinating activities to help protect the most vulnerable children and adults from harm, neglect and abuse
Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)	a non-ministerial department, independent of government, that regulates and inspects schools, colleges, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, education and training in prisons and other secure establishments, and the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service; assesses children's services in local areas, and inspects services for looked-after children, safeguarding and child protection; reports directly to Parliament

multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)

mechanism through which local criminal justice agencies (police, prison and probation trusts) and other bodies dealing with offenders work together in partnership to protect the public from serious harm by managing sexual and violent offenders; established in each of the 42 criminal justice areas in England and Wales by sections 325 to 327B of the Criminal Justice Act 2003

police and crime commissioner (PCC)

elected entity for a police area, established under section 1, Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, responsible for securing the maintenance of the police force for that area and securing that the police force is efficient and effective; holds the relevant chief constable to account for the policing of the area; establishes the budget and police and crime plan for the police force; appoints and may, after due process, remove the chief constable from office

registered sex offender

a person required to provide his details to the police because he has been convicted or cautioned for a sexual offence as set out in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003, or because he has otherwise triggered the notification requirements (for example, by being made subject to a sexual offences prevention order); as well as personal details, a registered individual must provide the police with details about his movements, for example he must tell the police if he is going abroad and, if homeless, where he can be found; registered details may be accessed by the police, probation and prison service