

National Child Protection Inspections

Northumbria Police
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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 involving children 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 wellbeing 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 and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) 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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Summary

This report is a summary of the findings of our inspection of child¹ protection services in Northumbria, which took place in January 2018.

We examined the effectiveness of police action at each stage of their interactions with or for children, from initial contact through to the investigation of offences against them. We also scrutinised the treatment of children in custody, and assessed how the force is structured, led and governed in relation to its child protection services.²

Main findings from the inspection

The chief constable, his command team, and the police and crime commissioner (PCC) have a clear commitment to child protection, reflected in both the police and crime plan and the force's priorities.

In April 2016, Northumbria Police, as part of a wider and improved multi-agency framework, established a new safeguarding department. This is intended to enhance the coordination and provision of services, and to provide better outcomes for both children and adults. A new operating model was agreed in November 2017 and as part of this change, specialist safeguarding functions (including child protection) have received extra resources and investment.

We found the commitment to protecting children is evident throughout the force; clearly understood by officers and staff; and reflected in the changes made through the new operating model. We found examples of good work by individual frontline officers responding to incidents involving children. Moreover, we found specialist officers and staff responsible for managing child abuse investigations to be knowledgeable, committed and motivated. We also found good engagement with partner agencies across the six local authorities.

However, we also identified several areas where the force needs to improve, if it is to ensure the service it provides to children in need of help and protection is of a consistently high quality. In particular, the management of missing children assessed as having no apparent risk ('absent'), delays in the attendance of appropriate adults

¹ 'Child' in the report refers to a person under the age of 18. See 'Definitions and interpretations' for this and other definitions.

² For more information on our rolling programme of child protection inspections, see: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/our-work/article/child-abuse-and-child-protection-issues/national-child-protection-inspection/

to ensure the welfare of children detained in police custody, inconsistencies in the recording of actions such as safeguarding and onward planning, and the response to children at risk of child sexual exploitation.

During the inspection, we examined a total of 101 cases where children were identified as being at risk, and graded the quality of the force's child protection practice in each. Of these, the practice in 27 cases was rated as good, in 41 as requiring improvement, and in 33 as inadequate. This indicates that there is still work that needs to be done, however, the force has demonstrated its commitment to improve its approach to child safeguarding (through investment and the supportive leadership of the chief officer team and senior managers).

Conclusion

Senior leaders have made it clear that child protection and safeguarding is a priority for the force. The force has placed great emphasis on improving the awareness of officers and staff about their safeguarding responsibilities and wider aspects of vulnerability.

Throughout our inspection, we found that officers and staff who manage child abuse investigations are demonstrably committed and dedicated, often working in difficult and demanding circumstances. We found the safeguarding department to be a positive working environment, and officers and staff see it as a good place to work.

Work with partner agencies is effective, and progress is being made to implement a multi-agency safeguarding model. This should help achieve greater consistency both in the referral and assessment of risk and the development of protective plans.

Despite the above, there are inconsistencies in the service provided to children, and some areas in need of improvement, as identified through the case audits. We have made several recommendations, and will revisit the force no later than six months after the publication of this report to assess how it is managing the implementation of those recommendations.

1. Introduction

The police's responsibility to keep children safe

Under the Children Act 1989, a police constable is responsible for taking into police protection any child whom 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.³ 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.⁴

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 for 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 2017, the National Crime Agency's strategic assessment of serious and organised crime established that child sexual exploitation and abuse represents one of the highest serious and organised crime risks.⁵ Child sexual abuse is also listed as one of the six national threats specified in the *Strategic Policing Requirement*.⁶

³ Children Act 1989, section 46.

⁴ Children Act 2004, section 11.

⁵ *National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime*, National Crime Agency, May 2017. Available at: www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/807-national-strategic-assessment-of-serious-and-organised-crime-2017/file

⁶ 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 *Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-policing-requirement

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*,⁷ sets out the expectations of all partner agencies 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.⁸

⁷ *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, HM Government, February 2017 (latest update). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁸ Details of how we conduct these inspections can be found at annex A.

2. Context for the force

Northumbria Police has approximately 4,780 people in its workforce.⁹ This includes:

- 3,245 police officers;
- 1,380 police staff; and
- 158 police community support officers.

The force provides policing services to the counties of Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. The police force area covers 2,144 square miles, including approximately 140 miles of coastline in the north-east of England. Although there are some affluent areas, the force area has high levels of poverty. There is a population of around 1.4 million people, with residents mainly living in the urban centres, which include the cities of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Sunderland as well as in smaller towns on the coast.

There are six local authorities in the Northumbria Police area: Gateshead; Newcastle; North Tyneside; Northumberland; South Tyneside; and Sunderland, each with its own local safeguarding children board (LSCB). The most recent Ofsted judgments for the local authorities are set out below.

Local authority	Judgment	Date published
Gateshead	Good	March 2016
Newcastle	Requires improvement	July 2017
North Tyneside	Good	March 2017
Northumberland	Requires improvement	April 2016
South Tyneside	Good	November 2017
Sunderland	Inadequate	July 2015

⁹ Source: Home Office police work force statistics, available from: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-work-force-england-and-wales-30-september-2017

An assistant chief constable is responsible for child protection across the force area. A detective chief superintendent is the operational head of safeguarding, supported by two detective superintendents who oversee specialist teams responsible for protecting children across the force area.

Although the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across the force area are all at different stages of development, they share three common principles: information sharing; joint decision making; and co-ordinated intervention.

3. Leadership, management and governance

Safeguarding is a priority for the force and the PCC, and this is reflected both in the police and crime plan 2017–21 and the force control strategy 2017–18. This strong commitment to protecting children was evident throughout the inspection, clearly understood by officers and staff, and reflected in the work to develop a new operating model (designed to meet both current and future demands).

The operating model (ratified in November 2017, and therefore in the early stages of implementation at the time of our inspection), was designed as part of a wider multi-agency framework to improve the co-ordination and provision of the force's services, as well as outcomes both for children and adults. In support of the new safeguarding structure established through the operating model, the force has invested in additional financial and human resources, to support specialist functions and meet current and future demands.

Professional relationships and collaboration with external partner organisations at both strategic and practitioner levels across the board were described as positive, with partners feeling able to engage and challenge the force where appropriate. Furthermore, partner organisations told us the force has a good understanding and knowledge of the risks to children in Northumbria, with officers contributing to multi-agency case audits and sharing information in relation to vulnerable children. The provision of force-wide data to the LSCBs was described to us as needing further refinement, to ensure the boards can assess the effectiveness of partnership working in their respective areas.

Force governance arrangements are fundamental to monitoring performance and demand, and we found the arrangements in place in Northumbria are clearly structured. The new protecting vulnerable people operational delivery group, which the assistant chief constable chairs, has been integral to the development of these governance arrangements.

However, performance information to build the force's understanding of outcomes for children at risk of harm requires further development. At present, the quality of work, outcomes for children, and demands for service are not sufficiently well understood by senior leaders. Instead, the focus of performance measures is on the quantity of child protection incidents and cases dealt with, rather than the quality.

The current limitations on available information is due in part to the force's current IT system, specifically that it impedes staff and officer access to information. In addition, we found that information related to child protection cases is recorded in multiple locations, sometimes on standalone databases, and therefore is not readily accessible to all officers and staff, making research and the assessment of risk both difficult and time-consuming.

The force recognises this weakness. It has plans in place to improve the ability of senior leaders to reassure themselves about the nature and quality of the decisions made to protect children, through the introduction of monthly performance review plans. Additionally, the force does not conduct any internal child protection safeguarding audits. The introduction of such a measure would better support its current performance monitoring process; it would provide senior officers with the necessary scrutiny and analysis on the quality of service by officers and staff, and the resulting outcomes for children.

The daily management meeting (which senior officers chair) effectively informs senior leaders about risk, threat and harm, with a clear focus on safeguarding and vulnerability. This structured approach provides good daily oversight of local problems and significant incidents or investigations.

4. Case file analysis

Results of case file reviews

During our inspection, Northumbria Police selected and self-assessed the effectiveness of its practice in 33 child protection cases. The cases selected were a random sample from across Northumbria, in accordance with HMICFRS criteria;¹⁰ we asked the force to rate its handling of each of the self-assessed cases. Of these 33 cases, force assessors graded the practice in 28 of the cases as good, and as requiring improvement in 5 cases. In none of the cases did the force grade its practice as inadequate. We also assessed these 33 child protection cases: we graded the force's practice in 9 as good; in 15 as requiring improvement; and in 9 as inadequate.

We selected and examined a further 68 cases as part of the inspection: we assessed the force's practice in 18 as good; in 26 as requiring improvement; and in 24 as inadequate.

The case audits undertaken during this inspection provide strong evidence that improvements are needed in several areas of the force's child protection service.

In several of the cases examined, we found limited information recorded on force systems about the investigative or safeguarding tasks undertaken, and the agreed outcomes from discussions with partner agencies. This is at odds with our findings from the force's child abuse and vulnerable adults cases, which contained clear initial investigation plans and supervisory reviews, and were generally conducted in a timely and meaningful manner.

Figure 1: Cases assessed by both Northumbria Police and HMICFRS

	Good	Requiring improvement	Inadequate
Force assessment	28	5	0
HMICFRS assessment	9	15	9

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

Figure 2: Additional cases assessed only by HMICFRS

	Good	Requiring improvement	Inadequate
HMICFRS assessment	18	26	24

Breakdown of case file audit results by area of child protection

Figure 3: Cases assessed involving enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989¹¹

Case type	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989	6	5	1

These are cases in which a child has been identified as in need of protection, so is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. We found:

- the force considered safeguarding risks where identified in cases;
- good supervisory oversight; and
- evidence of joint working with children’s social care services (although the outcomes of that work, particularly strategy meetings, are not recorded in any detail).

Figure 4: Cases assessed involving referrals relating to domestic abuse incidents or crimes

Case type	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Referrals relating to domestic abuse incidents or crimes	5	6	0

Further detail of some of these individual cases, relating to domestic abuse incidents, is given in the chapters that follow.

Common themes include:

- timely responses to incidents;
- referrals to partners such as children’s social care services, leading to co-ordinated interventions; and
- referrals to Operation Encompass.

¹¹ Local authorities, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, have a duty to make enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Figure 5: Cases assessed involving referrals arising from incidents other than domestic abuse

Case type	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Referrals arising from incidents other than domestic abuse	5	1	3

Further detail of some of these individual cases, relating to non-domestic abuse incidents, is given in the chapters that follow.

Common themes include:

- some good examples of safeguarding and investigation of cases;
- prompt initial actions undertaken by the police; and
- joint working with partners.

Figure 6: Cases assessed involving children at risk from child sexual exploitation

Case type	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Cases involving children at risk of child sexual exploitation both online and offline	2	8	11

Further detail of some of these individual cases, relating to CSE, is given in the chapters that follow.

Common themes include:

- in complex or long-term cases investigated by the Sanctuary team, a contact log is maintained for recording engagement between the officer in the case and victim;
- recording of information about the progress of criminal investigations is inconsistent;
- despite referrals being made to children's social care services, strategy discussions are often either not documented or do not take place; and
- an absence of documented supervision.

Figure 7: Cases assessed involving missing and absent children

Case type	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Children missing	3	6	6

Further detail of some of these individual cases, relating to missing and absent children, is given in the chapters that follow.

Common themes include:

- the initial response to locate a child is often appropriate, but early intervention and long-term inter-agency planning can be ineffective;
- assessment of risk often focuses on the most recent missing episode; and
- insufficient oversight of the decisions made by staff in the resolution without deployment team when children are reported missing.

Figure 8: Cases assessed involving children taken to a place of safety under section 46 of the Children Act 1989¹²

Case type	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Children taken to a place of safety by police officers using powers under section 46 of the Children Act 1989	2	3	1

Further detail of some of these individual cases, relating to section 46 of the Children Act 1989, is given in the chapters that follow.

Common themes include:

- we observed examples of effective decision making to protect children; and
- where there are significant concerns about the safety of children, officers use their powers appropriately to remove children from harm's way.

¹² Under section 46 of the Children Act 1989, the police may remove a child to suitable accommodation if they consider that the child is at risk of significant harm. A child in these circumstances is referred to as 'having been taken into police protection'.

Figure 9: Cases assessed involving sex offender management in which children have been assessed as at risk from the person being managed

Case type	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Sex offender management where children have been assessed as at risk from the person being managed	3	3	2

Further detail of some of these individual cases, relating to sex offender management, is given in the chapters that follow.

Common themes include:

- neighbourhood officers are made aware of registered sex offenders (RSOs) living in their areas;
- the ratio of offender manager to RSOs is above what would be considered reasonable; and
- some 92 visits were overdue.

Figure 10: Cases assessed involving children detained in police custody

Case type	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Cases involving children in police custody	1	9	9

Further detail of some of these individual cases, relating to children detained in police custody, is given in the chapters that follow.

Common themes include:

- custody officers and staff understand the conditions under which bail can be denied;
- evidence of long delays in appropriate adults attending custody when a child has been arrested; and
- healthcare practitioners (HCPs) not being contacted despite clear risk indicators.

5. Initial contact

Northumbria Police has invested in training both its frontline and specialist officers and staff about their roles in safeguarding children. We found that this training has translated into an increased sense of awareness and responsibility when children who may be vulnerable are encountered.

We saw some good examples of officers responding quickly to clear and specific concerns about children. Officers attended promptly, effectively carrying out preliminary tasks, such as ensuring the immediate safety of children, securing evidence and making an assessment about how best to proceed. Additionally, they demonstrated an understanding of the need to speak to children, and to check on their welfare, while observing their demeanour and living conditions to help identify risk. We saw evidence that, where appropriate, officers complete a child concern notification (CCN) form to make a referral to children's social care services. Moreover, we observed officers undertaking good initial enquiries and using their powers to arrest when necessary.

A ten-year-old girl was discovered by officers to have been left alone in her home. Officers spoke with the child, gained access to the property, and discovered that she had been left by her mother (who was at work) for twelve hours. Officers took the child into police protection and contacted children's social care services. A comprehensive CCN was completed which included the views of the child. The child was subsequently returned into the care of her mother, overseen by children's social care services for her longer-term safeguarding.

A call to '999' was received from a female, reporting that her husband had assaulted her and their 14-year-old daughter. There was a robust and rapid response from the force: officers arrived at the scene within four minutes, arrested the suspect, and subsequently charged and remanded him to attend court the same day. Moreover, timely referrals were made by officers to children's social care services for all the children in the household. This enabled effective safeguarding interventions through multi-agency investigations and planning, together with support from an independent domestic violence advisor.

Northumbria Police's response to incidents is managed by call-handlers, resource controllers and their supervisors within the two communications centres. THRIVE¹³

¹³ THRIVE is a risk assessment tool that considers six elements to assist in identifying the appropriate response grade based on the needs of the caller and the circumstances of the incident, namely: threat; harm; risk; investigation; vulnerability; and engagement.

assessments are used by these staff to identify risk in each incident, and are subject to reviews by team leaders. However, like our 2017 effectiveness inspection,¹⁴ we found that the completion of these assessments and reviews was inconsistent.

If a call relating to an incident is linked to a vulnerable person it is flagged, ensuring the response is prioritised over other similar-graded incidents. There are also additional 'trigger' processes in place to determine responses to those at increased risk of harm, such as children under 11 years of age or those at risk of child sexual exploitation. Children in these cases cannot be categorised as 'absent' when reported as missing (i.e. of no apparent risk), which ensures an appropriate and enhanced police response. Similarly, incidents which have been subject to a THRIVE assessment and found to contain limited investigatory opportunities can be managed by the resolution without deployment team (RWD),¹⁵ to improve the timeliness of the response and ensure that frontline officers and staff are available to respond to demand.

Despite these processes, we found insufficient oversight of the decisions made by RWD staff when children are reported missing. There is an apparent lack of consideration given to the wider risks posed to children. In particular, a significant number of looked-after children (who are over 11 years of age) were classified as being of no apparent risk (i.e. absent rather than missing). As a result, in several cases the wider risks to children were not identified at the earliest opportunity and this in turn delayed the development of an appropriate protective plan.

Since September 2017, the force's communications centre has been conducting a pilot of the use of 'specialist diary cars'. This system is designed to manage calls regarding domestic abuse, historic abuse, and rape reports (for which there are no immediate safeguarding concerns or forensic evidence considerations). Victims are able to make appointments to see specialist officers, which reduces the need to repeat difficult and sensitive disclosures to different officers. This aims to improve the management of incidents which are appropriate for appointments, the pilot has yet to be evaluated.

We found examples of cases where officers worked well with other agencies to protect children and ensure their needs were met. However, we also found cases involving domestic abuse incidents where there were children in the family, but absent at the time of the incident, and for whom CCN forms had not been completed.

¹⁴ *PEEL: Police effectiveness 2017 - An inspection of Northumbria Police*, HMICFRS, 2018. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/peel-assessments/peel-2017/northumbria/

¹⁵ The RWD deals with incidents which have had a THRIVE assessment identifying the threat, harm and risk as low, and the likelihood of reoccurrence of any threat of further harm as low. Incidents managed by the RWD include fraud, burglary other than a dwelling (no forensic opportunities or need for immediate response), criminal damage and cases of absence (as opposed to missing).

Because of such omissions, information that would provide potential opportunities to intervene and safeguard children at an earlier stage is not available. Officers and staff told us that it had not been made clear to them that if children lived in the house but were not present a CCN should still be completed and the risks they faced considered. The force is aware of the confusion among its workforce in relation to this requirement, and we were told it intends to provide updated guidance to address this weakness.

Recommendation

- We recommend that, within three months, Northumbria Police reviews its processes to ensure officers and staff draw together all available information from police systems to inform their responses and risk assessments about missing children.

6. Assessment and help

Northumbria Police is working with partner agencies to develop multi-agency safeguarding arrangements within all six local authority areas in Northumbria. Currently these arrangements are at different stages of development, and as a result there are a range of practices in place to manage referrals about potential risks to children. Gateshead, Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside each have or are developing a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). South Tyneside has an integrated safeguarding intervention team (ISIT) and Sunderland has an integrated contact and referral team (ICRT). For Gateshead and Newcastle, referrals are currently managed by the central referral unit (CRU), based within police premises.

In some local authority areas, children's social care services and the force meet daily to decide the appropriate response for each CCN. In addition, a group of police community support officers (PCSOs) are undertaking a joint pilot (to be evaluated) with the early help provision teams in Northumberland and Sunderland to improve joint working and provide earlier support to vulnerable children.

The force is working hard to develop a consistent approach and align its practice to manage submitted CCNs better, but this will take time. In the period January to December 2017, there were 36,269 CCNs created across the force area. The difficulty of improving and aligning practice across the six different authorities is recognised by senior officers, and they are actively engaged with partner agencies to implement the new arrangements.

In a significant number of the cases we reviewed, there was no record of any police involvement in the assessment of longer-term risk or in the development of protective plans. Moreover, there was often no evidence of a strategy discussion or meeting having taken place, and no detail of what (if any) joint assessment of need had occurred. The consequence of this is that a joint plan to investigate the case and safeguard the children involved is usually not recorded.

However, this was not true of those cases dealt with by the child abuse and vulnerable adults team: these were found to contain clear initial investigation plans and supervisory reviews, which were generally conducted in a timely and meaningful manner.

A 20-month-old boy was presented at hospital in a dirty, cold and emaciated condition by his mother, who appeared to have little interaction with the child. A medical examination revealed bruises that were assessed as non-accidental injuries. There was a good timely response by the police, and an effective joint investigation began with a prompt strategy meeting taking place. Safeguarding for all children in the household was considered, and the child's siblings were placed in the care of their maternal grandparents. The baby was placed with foster carers, while the investigation continued.

The force has trained officers and staff about the identification of, and response to, child sexual exploitation. However, inspectors found that when considering a safeguarding response, officers do not always display a thorough awareness of the risks associated with sexual exploitation; this can undermine the quality of their decision making and the development of longer-term protective plans.

The force received a call from a school, following disclosures made by three pupils that they had been visiting a 28-year-old man who had supplied them with cigarettes and alcohol. Subsequent enquiries identified further children who had also attended the suspect's address. At the time of inspection, only one of the identified children had been spoken to by officers, and there was no evidence recorded of consideration given to any wider risks of grooming or of child sexual exploitation.

We are also concerned about the protection provided to some children who regularly go missing from home. We assessed 14 such cases, and judged the force's practice in 6 as inadequate and in 5 as requiring improvement. Only in three relatively straightforward cases was the force's practice found to be good.

Although we found the force's initial response to locate a child is often appropriate, early intervention and long-term inter-agency planning can be ineffective. 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 could be reported missing over 50 times without any recognition of wider risks and their vulnerability. We found that the force's assessment of risk often focuses on the most recent missing episode, rather than taking account of information held by police about previous incidents.

A report was received of a missing 16-year-old girl, who had a history of such behaviour, involving at least 51 previous incidents. Police records on the child also included 68 CCNs with indicators that she was at risk of sexual exploitation and had a history of self-harm, drug and alcohol misuse, and of association with homeless males. However, these recorded factors were not considered as part of the risk assessment for the most recent episode. She was therefore categorised as 'absent' (i.e. assessed as at no apparent risk). The supporting rationale on her record stated: "the absence is within character where she is known to prefer to be out on the streets".

The force, in partnership with the PCC, has developed and provided training about coercive control related to domestic abuse. This training included the effects that such abuse can have on children and the need to record these, both within the domestic abuse stalking and harassment (DASH) risk assessment and on the CCN. Officers completing a CCN in such circumstances should record the following: details of the domestic abuse incident; demeanour of and effects on a child; and details of the child's school. Every day the force shares this information with relevant schools, enabling better support to be provided for those children. Those working with the force from children's social care services told us that this joint work with education-providers is beneficial in mitigating the adverse effects on children exposed to domestic abuse. This process operates in all schools within Northumbria, and is known as Operation Encompass.

Domestic abuse cases assessed as high risk are referred to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) for the implementation of longer-term safeguarding plans. There are six conferences held in each local authority area every fortnight and these are chaired by a detective inspector. In 2017, there were 3,037 cases heard at the MARACs within Northumbria.

We examined a sample of minutes from MARACs and found that they are well-attended by representatives from a wide range of agencies, including the force. Information is shared routinely to protect both the victims of domestic abuse and any children affected by it. Cases are categorised as those with children; those without children; and repeat cases, and this approach helps focus on cases involving children at the start of each meeting. The minutes we examined clearly identified the risks associated with each case, and listed the allocated actions needed for their mitigation. They also listed an equal amount of support and intervention actions.

Recommendation

- We recommend that, within three months, Northumbria Police improves its practice in cases of children who go missing from home. As a minimum, this should include improving officers' and 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;
 - the links between children going missing from home and the risk of sexual exploitation; and
 - the significance of drawing together all available information from police systems, including information about people who pose a risk to children, to better inform risk assessments.

7. Investigation

We found some good individual examples of investigating officers demonstrating an appropriate mix of investigative and protective approaches. This ensures that the safeguarding of children remains central to the force's efforts while criminal investigative opportunities are pursued.

A four-year-old boy disclosed to nursery staff that he had been assaulted by his parents. The boy, who had speech difficulties, had described that he was 'sad at home'. Following the disclosure there was a good response from police and partner agencies, namely a joint visit and strategy meeting. All safeguarding concerns for the child were addressed, and all appropriate lines of enquiry followed with the case being well-supervised; this was achieved despite the reluctance of the child's parents to cooperate with the authorities. The child was subsequently placed in the care of foster parents, and is now understood to be thriving.

Operation Sanctuary is a Northumbria Police-led multi-agency operation that provides support to those at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking. It began in Newcastle in 2014 and has evolved into a dedicated multi-agency team with three main practice areas: investigative response; intelligence development and victim safeguarding and support. The team includes police officers with a child protection background, as well as staff from children's social care services, support organisation Changing Lives, children's charity Barnardo's (which provides a child counselling facility), and Bright Futures (which provides educational support).

Frontline officers we spoke to were aware of the Sanctuary team and we found evidence of incidents where the potential for child sexual exploitation was a factor routinely being referred to them. The supervisor within the Sanctuary team reviews daily all referred child sexual exploitation cases with the above representatives, and a decision is made as to which part of the team will take the lead, or whether the matter needs to be directed to an external organisation. This approach is used to ensure that victims are appropriately supported, and that the team's resources are available to respond to the most urgent cases.

Where a complex or long-term case is being investigated by the Sanctuary team, a contact log is maintained for recording every engagement between the officer in the case and victim. We found that where there are matters of note these are also appropriately recorded within the force's IT systems. This is to ensure that information about risk and the decisions made by staff about protective plans are accessible by the rest of the force. However, we found that the recording of

information about the progress of criminal investigations is poor. Information is recorded on multiple systems with no evidence of clear or consistent guidance about how and where such records are to be managed.

We also found that, despite CCNs being shared with children's social care services, strategy discussions are often either not documented or do not take place at all, with no explanation. This, combined with a lack of recorded supervision or updates from officers, means that there is very limited evidence that officers contribute to the development of protective plans. In addition to representing a failure to comply with the responsibilities described in the Working Together statutory guidance, this means that future decisions about risk will not be informed by all the relevant information. Similarly, although the local authority designated officer (LADO)¹⁶ is informed of investigations where the suspect is known to work with children there is often no recorded outcome from this disclosure, nor information about how the potential wider risks posed are being managed or mitigated.

In April 2017, the force received a report from a 15-year-old girl that she and others had been sexually assaulted by a named adult male (who had also 'spiked' their drinks as part of his offending behaviour). The victim was not interviewed until July 2017, and the suspect was not interviewed until November that year. The case records contained no investigative updates, and this was compounded by a delayed supervisory review (which did not take place until three months after the initial report). At the time of our inspection, this case was still unresolved.

In October 2017, the force received a report that a 13-year-old girl had been the subject of online sexual abuse (she had befriended an adult stranger on a social networking site and had been encouraged to partially undress and view sexual activity). Response officers attended in a timely manner and seized items for analysis. Although there was no record of a formal account being obtained from the child, the risks were nevertheless recognised by the force. As a result, a CCN was submitted and shared with children's social care services. The case file contained limited updates on the investigation of the alleged crime, and the police crime-recording system had no record of an investigation plan. A supervisor review dated January 2018 stated that there had been no updates, and instructed that the investigating officer address any outstanding enquiries as a matter of urgency; at the time of our review, there was nothing further recorded on the case file.

¹⁶ The role of the LADO is set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2017). The LADO must be contacted in respect of all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child, possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

The force currently operates a foreign national offenders team, part of whose role is the disruption of the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. The team works alongside immigration staff which enables more effective information sharing when appropriate. This is positive and we saw evidence of the team working with businesses and children to raise awareness of the risk of sexual exploitation and the law as well as undertaking enforcement activity when necessary.

A multi-agency tasking and co-ordination (MATAC) process – like multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) – has been established to target the most prolific and dangerous domestic abuse perpetrators in Northumbria. These individuals are identified through the sharing of information between the police, CPS, housing providers, local authorities, children’s social care and probation services. Offenders are assessed on the basis of the risk they pose and are then given support to prevent and reduce the chances of re-offending. At the time of our inspection, 371 such individuals were in MATAC process. Moreover, the force reported that the re-offending rate had reduced by 63 percent in relation to crimes of domestic abuse. This is innovative and effective practice.

Northumbria Police uses intermediaries – specially trained individuals – to support vulnerable victims and witnesses to give evidence. Intermediaries are particularly useful in assisting the police to communicate effectively with child victims. Before interviewing any child, the use of an intermediary should be considered to support and facilitate the child in giving the best possible evidence, and ensuring that their views are heard. However, officers and staff told us there are often delays in obtaining the services of intermediaries (with anecdotal evidence of delays of up to six weeks). This is a national issue. This has a detrimental effect on the ability of child victims to provide accurate and timely accounts to assist the police with their investigations.

The force has six co-ordinators who attend initial child protection conferences (ICPCs). It also has four disclosure officers who prepare the reports for ICPCs and review conferences (although review conferences are not attended by the force, a report is still submitted for them). However, we found that attendance across Northumbria varies: in 2017 South Tyneside officers received 219 invitations, of which 69 percent (152) were attended; in comparison, Gateshead officers received 216 invitations and attended 88 percent (186). For cases where force representatives do not attend an ICPC, we were told that a report is sent to the conference. While this may be appropriate in some cases, outcomes for children may be adversely affected when the police are not present to contribute to discussions regarding a child’s welfare, planning decisions, or their continuing needs. Additionally, we could find no evidence that the decision whether to attend an ICPC was made on the basis of an assessment of risk as opposed to being the result of workload pressures.

Recommendations

- We recommend that Northumbria Police immediately undertakes a review, to include:
 - how information is shared and the development of joint protective plans; and
 - the recording on police systems of decisions reached at meetings, to provide officers and staff with the awareness of all relevant developments.
- We recommend that, within three months, Northumbria Police improves its child sexual exploitation investigations, paying particular attention to:
 - ensuring a prompt response to any relevant concern raised;
 - improving the oversight and management of cases to ensure that standards are being met; and
 - ensuring that referrals and investigations are prompt and effective .
- We recommend that, within six months, Northumbria Police reviews the provision of registered intermediary services for children to ensure they are available to be appointed when required, to help improve the quality of the child's evidence.

8. Decision making

We found that when a case is clearly defined as a child protection matter from the outset, the police response is generally appropriate, and we observed examples of effective decision making to protect children. When there are significant concerns about the safety of children, such as parents leaving young children at home alone or being drunk while looking after them, officers handle 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,¹⁷ and 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 exceptions of some cases involving children at risk of sexual exploitation and those missing from home, we found evidence that frontline officers and staff make effective decisions during the early stages of child protection matters.

However, despite finding examples of officers taking appropriate protective action, we are concerned by the poor standard of recording on police systems. Accurate and timely recording of information is essential for good decision making in child protection matters. In the cases examined, we found that information – particularly in relation to strategy meetings, safeguarding plans, and the agreed outcomes from discussions with partner agencies – was frequently incomplete or missing entirely. In those cases where information relating to risk was recorded, this was frequently done in multiple locations, sometimes on stand-alone databases or held by partner agencies (to which most officers and staff in the force do not have access), making research to assess risk both difficult and time-consuming.

Northumbria Police has several IT systems on which it records information relating to child protection. 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 is not always clear what decisions have been made to protect a child or what actions are being taken within the criminal investigation. Accurate, timely and consistent recording of information on a single system would better support decision making.

¹⁷ 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.

Recommendation

- We recommend that, within three months, Northumbria Police 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 should include:
 - what information should be recorded (and in what form) on systems to enable good decisions; and
 - the importance of ensuring that records are made promptly and kept up to date.

9. Trusted adult

We found that in some (though not all) child protection cases, officers consider carefully how best to approach a child (their parents) and explore the most effective ways in which to communicate with them; such sensitivity builds confidence and creates demonstrably stronger relationships between the child (their parents) and police. For matters in which immediate safeguarding is needed, we found that the force works well with external organisations, family members, and other individuals to better protect children, and that its carefully-considered and sensitive approach enables effective safeguarding outcomes for vulnerable children.

Officers attended a call relating to an incident in a park where they discovered a female with her two daughters (a toddler and a five-year-old). The mother was drunk and incoherent. One of the children appeared to be extremely upset, and was seen to have sustained injury to her head and hand. Officers took the children into police protection; an ambulance took them to hospital under the care of their aunt and grandmother, who had been called upon for support. The force contacted children's social care services, which arranged for temporary foster care for the children (owing to concerns of overcrowding at other family members' homes). The children's mother was detained and interviewed under charges of assault and neglect. A strategy discussion was subsequently held where the views of the mother and children were sought, and the children were placed in the care of an aunt living in the local area.

The force has made significant investments in initiatives through which it can better engage with children, such as the development of both its police cadets (who are aged between 14 and 18 years), and the mini-police (children aged 10 years, selected from local schools). The force makes use of these groups to consult and seek feedback about new initiatives.

In 2017, South Tyneside LSCB together with the force commissioned the production of a drama based on the theme of child sexual exploitation (using real-life interviews carried out by the force), which was performed in schools in the local area. Its purpose was to raise awareness about a range of topics, including healthy relationships, grooming, consent, and signposting to support services. This initiative resulted in several disclosures by children of sexual exploitation.

Safety Works is an innovative and interactive learning centre, designed as a mini town, with its own supermarket, road, metro station, home, hospital and police station. This facility was established by the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, working in partnership with the PCC, Northumbria Police and others. Using this facility, education is provided for children aged between 5 and 16 years old, to learn about the concept of child sexual exploitation and other situations where they may

be vulnerable, and provides guidance on how to respond. Provision of these sessions is supported by two PCSOs who work full-time at the centre. At the time of inspection, some 28,000 children had benefitted from this facility.

10. Managing those posing a risk to children

Northumbria Police has a dedicated unit to manage registered sex offenders (RSOs): the multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) team.

We found that officers and staff within the team have been appropriately trained. However, the detective chief inspector and detective inspector currently responsible for oversight of the team have not been trained to use the violent and sexual offenders' register (ViSOR). This omission impedes the effective supervision of the MAPPA team and the supervisors' ability to test the quality of decision making. We also found some delays in supervisors completing ViSOR-related tasks.

In January 2017, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) issued guidance that RSOs should be moved towards either active or reactive management approaches. For an RSO who has had an active risk management system (ARMS)¹⁸ assessment indicating low levels of risk, and where the offender manager is satisfied they have committed no offences nor presented any risk for a three-year period, the force may move from active management (where visits are prescribed), to reactive management (for which visits do not occur). The chosen management approach is kept under regular review, and would change if there was a significant shift in circumstances.

We found that officers in Northumbria are trained in the use of ARMS. HMICFRS is pleased to note that at the time of the inspection, 94 percent of local offenders had been the subject of an ARMS assessment. However, the force is yet to move any offenders assessed as presenting low levels of risk into reactive management.

Although the use of active and reactive styles of management in the force is still in its early stages, the force expects that its effective application will allow more focus on those RSOs posing the highest risk and will, to an extent, ease demand through the reactive management of those who fit the criteria. Under the new operating model, the management of low and medium-risk RSOs will migrate to neighbourhood teams, who are better placed to monitor the activities of these offenders.

The force's IT system enables neighbourhood officers to be made aware of RSOs living in their areas, and it has a facility for all such RSOs to be flagged. This ensures that if an RSO comes to the force's notice, the offender's manager will be informed, and allows for swift risk assessments. Flagging is particularly important in enabling the force to conduct the reactive management of RSOs effectively.

¹⁸ 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 the management of convicted sex offenders in the community.

At the time of inspection, the ratio of offender manager to RSOs was approximately 1:71, above what would be considered reasonable (a ratio of approximately 1:50). In addition, we found 92 overdue visits, ranging from high to low-risk RSOs. Notwithstanding these potential weaknesses, we found some examples of effective safeguarding and proactive responses by the force.

At a review of his notification requirements, an RSO undertook a polygraph test, indicating both a previously undisclosed contact with children and that he had a 7-year-old daughter (of whom the force was previously unaware). Officers immediately took positive action: the RSO was placed under arrest, and children's services were involved. As a result, an appropriate safeguarding measure – namely, a sexual harm prevention order – was obtained against the offender.

At present, the force's MAPPA team does not have the capacity to manage effectively those RSOs within the force area subject to sexual harm prevention orders (of which there are 214) and sexual offences prevention orders (of which there are 426).

Within the police online investigation team (POLIT), there is an outstanding list of cases which, following intelligence checks, have all been risk-assessed as 'low priority, awaiting allocation'. The oldest case in the list was initially recorded in June 2017 and was ready for enforcement in July 2017. We were told that these cases will not be allocated to officers for investigation until they have attended the next course on the initial crime investigators development programme (which was due to take place in February 2018).

11. Police detention

If, when charged with an offence, 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.

We found that there is a good understanding by custody officers and 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.¹⁹

We examined 19 custody cases. In seven of those, the requirement applied for a custody officer to ensure the move of a child to local authority (secure or non-secure) accommodation. We found in all seven of these cases that early requests had been made for accommodation, resulting in two children being moved out of police custody. The remainder of cases, which had been requests for secure accommodation, resulted in the child remaining in police detention, due to a lack of available local authority secure accommodation.

Juvenile 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. During our inspection of Northumbria Police, there were no copies of these certificates on the custody system, nor available for us to examine for cases where a child had been detained after charge but not transferred to local authority accommodation. The force custody lead told us that in a recent internal audit of the 32 cases where children were detained after charge, only eight contained a reference within the detention log that a certificate had been completed.

Provision of appropriate adult²⁰ schemes operating across Northumbria (to provide children with access to support and advice) is inconsistent. We heard from officers and staff that sometimes out-of-hours requests for appropriate adults are not met. Moreover, we found evidence of long delays in appropriate adults attending custody

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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 years old, and who is not a police officer or a person employed by the police.

when a child has been arrested, and that when they do attend it often coincides with the times of interview, rather than to ensure the rights and welfare of the child in custody. In several cases where children had been arrested on a warrant or for a breach of bail, there was no record of an appropriate adult having attended.

A 16-year-old boy was arrested on suspicion of burglary. There was then a delay of 12 hours for the attendance of an appropriate adult, which was ultimately arranged based on the time of his interview.

A 17-year-old boy was arrested for failing to appear at court. His rights and entitlements were given without the presence of an appropriate adult, and there was no record of any appropriate adult contacted to ensure his welfare during his detention in custody, which was for more than 11 hours before being taken to court.

Healthcare practitioners (HCPs) provide services to detainees in the force's custody suites; they are responsible for discussing with a detained child any concern he or she may have. The HCP also has access to their medical and mental health records, and this can help to safeguard children during their time in police custody. However, we were concerned to find that in some of the cases reviewed, the HCP was not contacted despite clear risk indicators.

A 15-year-old boy was arrested in a care home, and had barricaded himself into his room and turned on the gas, which he inhaled. Although he was taken to custody with a paramedic (and not to hospital), there was no referral made to the HCP in relation to his behaviour.

In a separate case, a 14-year-old boy was arrested late at night following his breaking in at a health centre. Upon his arrest, the child disclosed that he had ingested 16 tablets, and he was then taken to hospital. Upon the child's discharge from hospital and transfer to police custody, no referral was made to the HCP to assess whether he was fit to be detained (as per the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984).

During his detention, the child was seen on two occasions tying a jumper around his neck, the second of which occurred hours after the first, and at which point the jumper was removed from his possession. The custody record entry in relation to his behaviour while detained stated "I have not asked for the nurse to assess the detained person due to no injuries and it did not appear to be a serious attempt to self-harm".

Although the force does gather custody data on children, this is limited to information such as numbers arrested and voluntary attendance. The force does not gather data on the number of children detained after charge and appropriate adult attendance.

Recommendation

- We recommend that, within six months, Northumbria Police should:
 - improve the timeliness of adequate appropriate adult support for children who are arrested;
 - ensure that custody staff comply with their statutory duties to complete detention certificates if a child is detained for any reason in police custody following charge; and
 - ensure that custody officers, where necessary, make sure that detained children receive appropriate clinical attention in accordance with the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Conclusion

The overall effectiveness of the force and its response to children who need help and protection

Northumbria Police has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving its services for the protection of vulnerable children, and this is visible at all levels of the force – from the chief constable to frontline staff. The chief constable and PCC have prioritised child protection, and it is clear there is a force-wide focus on safeguarding and working to improve outcomes for children.

We found good engagement with partner safeguarding agencies from across the six local authorities. Moreover, progress has been made to implement multi-agency safeguarding approaches across the force area, to improve the quality and consistency of the referral and assessment process.

The force has invested time and resources, both to involve and support children in its services through a number of initiatives. For instance, the Safety Works interactive centre provides advice and education regarding vulnerable situations, and the development of the mini-police and cadets programmes are also demonstrable examples of this ethos.

We found some examples of good work by individual frontline officers, responding effectively to incidents of concern involving children. We found specialist officers and staff responsible for managing child abuse investigations to be knowledgeable, committed and motivated. Despite these positive findings, we also found there are inconsistencies in the quality of information recorded on police systems such as investigation details, safeguarding measures, and onward planning. These details (where they are recorded) are often located across multiple systems which is inefficient and does not support the development of effective protective plans. The service provided to children at risk of child sexual exploitation also requires improvement to ensure all such children are appropriately safeguarded.

We found poor responses by some officers, often missing the wider risk posed, particularly for children categorised as absent, where risk was wrongly assessed and underestimated. When specialist officers undertake investigations and have the appropriate supervisory oversight, we found there is usually a positive outcome for such children. This positive approach now needs to be replicated across all areas of the force to ensure consistency of service.

Recommendations

Immediately

- We recommend that Northumbria Police immediately undertakes a review, to include:
 - how information is shared and the development of joint protective plans; and
 - the recording on police systems of decisions reached at meetings, to provide officers and staff with the awareness of all relevant developments.

Within three months

- We recommend that, within three months, Northumbria Police reviews its processes to ensure officers and staff draw together all available information from police systems to inform their responses and risk assessments about missing children.
- We recommend that, within three months, Northumbria Police improves its practice in cases of children who go missing from home. As a minimum, this should include improving officers' and 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;
 - the links between children going missing from home and the risk of sexual exploitation; and
 - the significance of drawing together all available information from police systems, including information about people who pose a risk to children, to better inform risk assessments.
- We recommend that, within three months, Northumbria Police 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 should include:
 - what information should be recorded (and in what form) on systems to enable good decisions; and
 - the importance of ensuring that records are made promptly and kept up to date.

- We recommend that, within three months, Northumbria Police improves its child sexual exploitation investigations, paying particular attention to:
 - ensuring a prompt response to any relevant concern raised;
 - improving the oversight and management of cases to ensure that standards are being met; and
 - ensuring that referrals and investigations are prompt and effective.

Within six months

- We recommend that, within six months, Northumbria Police reviews the provision of the registered intermediary services for children to ensure they are available to be appointed when required, to help improve the quality of the child's evidence.
- We recommend that, within six months, Northumbria Police should:
 - improve the timeliness of adequate appropriate adult support for children who are arrested;
 - ensure that custody staff comply with their statutory duties to complete detention certificates if a child is detained for any reason in police custody following charge; and
 - ensure that custody officers, where necessary, make sure that detained children receive appropriate clinical attention in accordance with the requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Next steps

Within six weeks of the publication of this report, HMICFRS will require an update of the steps taken by the force in acting upon the immediate recommendations made.

The force should provide an action plan within six weeks of the publication of this report to specify how it intends to respond to the other recommendations made in this report.

Subject to the updates and action plan received, we will revisit the force no later than six months after the publication of this report to assess how it is managing the implementation of all 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 February 2017.

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 officers and staff from within the police and from other agencies
- Examination of reports on significant case reviews or other serious cases
- 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 HMICFRS); 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 in which 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;
- child sexual exploitation; and
- the detention of children in police custody.

Annex B – Definitions and interpretations

In this report, the following words, phrases and expressions in the left-hand column have the meanings assigned to them in the right-hand column. Sometimes, the definition will be followed by a fuller explanation of the matter in question, with references to sources and other material which may be of assistance to the reader.

child	person under the age of 18 years
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)	working location in which public sector organisations with responsibilities for the safety of vulnerable people collaborate; 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)

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; responsible for securing the maintenance of the police force for that area and ensuring 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; established under s. 1 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011