

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of City of London Police



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Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

Calls for assistance per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2015

City of London Police

England and Wales

88

350

Domestic abuse calls for assistance per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2015

City of London Police

England and Wales

3.7

15.8



Crime

Crimes recorded per 1,000 population 12 months to 31 March 2015

City of London Police

England and Wales

16.8

61.6

Change in recorded crimes (excluding fraud) 12 months to 31 March 2015 against 12 months to 31 March 2014

City of London Police

England and Wales

-2.3%

+2.2%

Percentage of total crimes recorded (excluding fraud) as having a vulnerable victim 12 months to 31 March 2015

City of London Police

England and Wales

0.7%

10.7%

Percentage of total crimes recorded as domestic abuse 12 months to 31 March 2015

City of London Police

England and Wales

1.5%

10.0%

Change in domestic abuse recorded crime 12 months to 31 March 2015 against 12 months to 31 March 2014

City of London Police

England and Wales

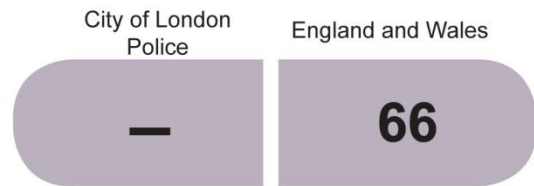
+27.4%

+20.8%



Domestic abuse arrest rate

Number of domestic abuse arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015*



Charge rate

Charge rate as a percentage of all crimes recorded (excluding fraud) 12 months to 31 March 2015



Domestic abuse charge rate as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015



***City of London Police was not able to provide data for the number of domestic abuse arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes.**

Data: for full details on the data used in this graphic see annex A in the vulnerability national report.

Introduction

The public expects their local police force to support victims of crime by responding to calls for help, putting in place the right support and keeping them informed. It is particularly important that vulnerable people, whether or not they have been a victim of crime, are identified early and receive the support they need.

As part of its annual inspections into police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL), HMIC's effectiveness programme assessed how well forces keep people safe and reduce crime. Within this programme, HMIC's vulnerability inspection examined the overall question, 'How effective are forces at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?' We have considered in depth how forces respond to and support missing and absent children and victims of domestic abuse, and assessed how well prepared forces are to respond to and safeguard children at risk of sexual exploitation.

We have looked at four areas:

- How well does the force identify those who are vulnerable and assess their level of risk and need?
- How well does the force respond to vulnerable victims?
- How well does the subsequent police action and work with partners keep victims safe?
- How well does the force respond to and safeguard specific vulnerable groups (missing and absent children & victims of domestic abuse); and how well prepared is it to tackle child sexual exploitation?

At the heart of this inspection is the protection of people who are vulnerable. A force may therefore be judged as requiring improvement by HMIC where it exhibits shortcomings in one of these areas, even if its performance in other areas is strong, and even if there are many elements of its service that HMIC considers to be good.

This inspection follows up our 2014 domestic abuse inspection and reviews forces' progress on implementation of their action plans following that inspection. A national domestic abuse report summarising the findings across 43 forces is being published at the same time as this report.

During our inspection we collected data and plans from forces, conducted a review of case files and observed multi-agency meetings. We heard from victims of domestic abuse through a number of focus groups across England and Wales and conducted an online survey with practitioners, including Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, outreach and refuge workers, to gauge views on what has changed since the 2014 inspection and inform local practitioner focus groups.

During the in-force inspection, we interviewed chief officers in each force and held focus groups with officers, staff and partners, and made unannounced visits to police stations, force control rooms and specialist teams. We also worked with the force missing person coordinator (or equivalent) to review cases of missing and absent children, including children considered to be 'repeat absent' and 'repeat missing' and children shown to be at risk of child sexual exploitation.

All forces are subject to significant cost reductions and these issues have been reflected in our efficiency reports published in October 2015. The judgments we are making in this vulnerability report are made understanding the financial challenges forces are facing.

This report sets out the findings from this wide-ranging inspection of the City of London Police.

How effective is the force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?

Summary



Requires improvement

The City of London Police has a good understanding of its core communities, which are predominantly the business sector and to a lesser extent, the hotel and residential populace.

This knowledge and insight provides a firm platform for the force and its partners to provide a service to the vulnerable members of its communities. Increasingly, the force is collaborating more closely with the City of London Corporation¹ and the Safer City Partnership² in the provision of its service. HMIC has found, as a result of close partnership working within the City of London, that criminal justice and social care are more closely aligned and more responsive to the needs of victims.

The area policed by the City of London Police is very different from other police force areas. Consequently, the nature and scale of crimes against the vulnerable in the City differ considerably from other forces in England and Wales.

The chief officer team maintains a strong focus on the importance of the service to vulnerable people. For instance, the force's 'Behind Closed Doors' campaign to raise awareness amongst city workers of domestic abuse and stalking, and its undertaking to victims, the 'Victim's Voice is Paramount', had considerable profile alongside other priorities such as counter terrorism and economic crime.

However, HMIC found some areas requiring improvement – notably around the force's response to child sexual exploitation, where the scale and nature of the problem not fully understood by the force.

¹ The City of London Corporation is the municipal governing body for the City of London.

² The Safer City Partnership is a partnership of organisations which work together to reduce and prevent crime in the City of London.

We also found that the force is unacceptably inconsistent on the way it assesses the nature of victim's vulnerability. This was caused by staff not having received the training they required. For these reasons the force's ability to protect vulnerable people from harm and support victims is currently considered to require improvement.

How well does the force identify those who are vulnerable and assess their level of risk and need?

The force has systems in place to identify vulnerability through a structured question format at the first point of contact. All 999 and the majority of 101 calls are received within Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) call centres, where an initial risk assessment and grading take place; they are then transferred to the City of London Police for the deployment of officers or other action. HMIC found that the support available to the City of London staff to help with the assessment of vulnerability and deployment decisions is good. This is particularly so for victims of domestic abuse.

If the caller is deemed to be vulnerable, supervisors call them back to complete a secondary assessment. HMIC found that this structured approach to the screening of vulnerability serves the force well in determining how best to address the caller's needs.

Identifying those who are vulnerable

Forces define vulnerability in different ways. The majority of forces use either the definition from the government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime³ or that referred to in ACPO guidance.⁴ Nine forces use their own definition or a combination of these definitions.

The City of London Police uses the definition from the code of practice and defines vulnerability as:

You are eligible for enhanced entitlements under this Code as a vulnerable victim if:

- a) You are under 18 years of age at the time of the offence, or
- b) The quality of your evidence is likely to be affected because:

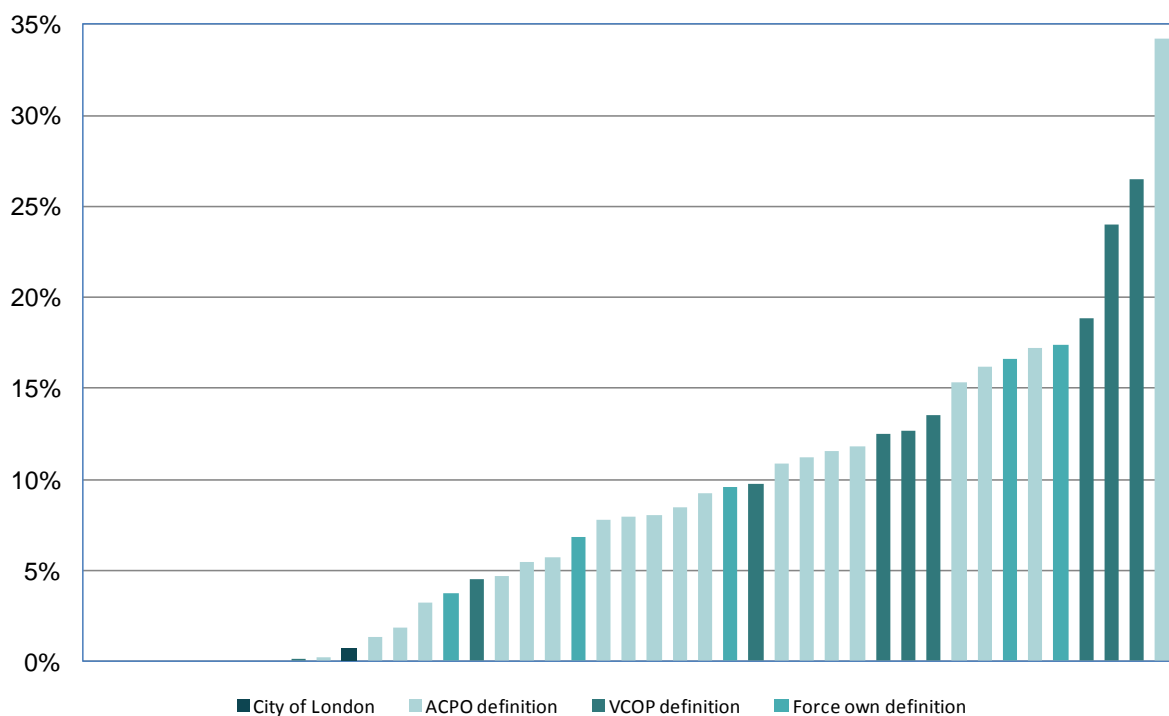
³ *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, 2013. Available from www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254459/code-of-practice-victims-of-crime.pdf

⁴ The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is now the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). *ACPO Guidance on Safeguarding and Investigating the Abuse of Vulnerable Adults*, NPIA, 2012. Available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/vulnerable-adults/

- 1) You suffer from mental disorder within the meaning of the Mental Health Act 1983;
- 2) You otherwise have a significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning; or
- 3) You have a physical disability or are suffering from a physical disorder.

The proportion of crime recorded which involves a vulnerable victim varies considerably between forces, from 0.03 percent to 34.3 percent. For the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 0.7 percent of all recorded crimes in the City of London were identified as involving a vulnerable victim. Eight forces were unable to provide this data at the time of data collection. There is no standard way in which forces are required to record on crime recording systems whether a victim is vulnerable and forces do this differently.

Figure 1: The proportion of police recorded crime with a vulnerable victim identified, by force, for the 12 months to 31 March 2015.



Source: HMIC data return

Understanding the risk to victims and ensuring they are protected and supported

In terms of providing the services that best meet the victim’s needs, HMIC found that the service provided to different vulnerable groups by the City of London Police was generally good. However, while the initial contact with vulnerable victims was of a good standard in MPS call centres HMIC found that a lack of training for City of London police station counter clerks means that their service is less assured. The

force has engaged a theatre company to contribute to the domestic abuse training curriculum. HMIC found that this has focused and heightened awareness amongst staff.

However, this is an area of improvement for the force, and it should improve the consistency and frequency of training delivered to ensure all staff have an awareness and understanding of identification of vulnerability of victims particularly at the initial point of contact.

HMIC acknowledges the City of London Police's resolve and operational proactivity, which are demonstrated by its investment in relation to newly identified areas of risk and in operating procedures designed to ensure that measures to deal with emerging threats and support for vulnerable victims are properly resourced. Examples include the establishment of a vulnerable victims co-ordinator role to work permanently with other service providers, the force's contribution to Operation Makesafe (a London-wide initiative to raise awareness amongst hoteliers of how to avoid their premises being used for the sexual exploitation of children), and providing a good service to vulnerable rough sleepers, in alliance with partner organisations.

How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?⁵

Building on the support provided at the first point of contact with the force, the subsequent service by emergency responders is generally good. The evaluation of risk and vulnerability remain a constant feature both in the initial response to calls and subsequent investigation.

Response officers

Frontline staff are well-trained and knowledgeable with regard to their obligations to domestic abuse victims. Officers attending domestic abuse incidents have good knowledge of how to assess risk and keep victims safe, and routinely use a risk assessment model to help them do so.⁶

Additionally, as a matter of routine, officers consider whether individuals in abusive relationships have been subjected to 'coercive or controlling behaviour', as well as the more traditional forms of physical abuse.

⁵ The question within the PEEL inspection methodology asks "How well does the force respond to vulnerable victims?" HMIC has amended the heading in this report to make it clear to the reader that this section focuses on the initial police response to vulnerable victims, rather than the overall police response to vulnerable victims.

⁶ Most forces use the domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence risk identification, assessment and management model (DASH): www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/domestic-abuse/risk-and-vulnerability/#approaches-to-risk-assessment

Officers we met spoke of the latest training on domestic abuse being delivered in conjunction with a theatre company; this had clearly challenged their thinking on the subject matter and left them better placed to see this type of crime from the perspective of a victim.

The force has a standardised procedure for identifying risk and vulnerability amongst all victims of crime. This provides a strong platform to initiate the joint operating procedures the force has in place with other service providers to support victims. The procedure is user friendly and incorporates a secure e-mail application whereby immediate notification can be made to social services or other interested parties.

Response officers are supported by 'real-time' intelligence: an intelligence analyst routinely researches all force databases to provide attending officers with up-to-date information about the venue and the individuals who they are likely to meet. This forewarns officers of any risk and vulnerability that may have been identified previously or that is historically associated with any individuals. This puts officers in the best possible position to tailor their service to an individual's needs.

Supervision of response to vulnerable victims

DASH risk assessments are subject to supervision, with the final decision on the level of risk resting with the duty inspector. While such corporate oversight of reporting procedures is welcomed by HMIC, some concern is raised at the fact that the duty inspectors have had no formal risk assessment training. This is likely to lead to variances in the risk level determined and may mean victims do not get the service they need.

The head of the PPU has also recently introduced a quality assurance process to dip sample risk assessment forms. This is identifying areas for improvement which are being addressed through the unit's input into the training curriculum.

HMIC found that PPU specialists are accessible and available to frontline staff for advice and guidance at all times.

How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners to keep victims safe?⁷

The force's focus on vulnerability is less apparent in the early stages of investigation than it is at the point of first contact and during the initial response to victims. There is inconsistent adherence to a force policy to record details of vulnerability on crime reports. However, the force's investigative resources are configured in such a way that PPU specialists can be allocated to the majority of investigations involving high-risk victims. This means that the force's most skilled and experienced investigators are aligned with the most vulnerable victims.

Partner organisations we spoke to commented favourably on how the force advances the need for joint working. They were also unanimous that the force's mantra of 'the victim's voice is paramount' is routinely translated into operational activity. They gave examples of how victims' needs and concerns, for example around potential re-housing, could be prioritised over the objectives of the investigation in consultation with partner agencies if this was believed to be appropriate.

Investigation of crimes involving vulnerable people

HMIC examined the case files of 40 investigations⁸ in which vulnerable victims were identified. We also interviewed investigators in specialist investigative units and frontline officers who also investigate crime.

The force's crime reporting system includes information about whether the victim is vulnerable. While this is mandatory, it was apparent from the review of case files that this policy is not being complied with as a matter of course. This is an area of improvement for the force and it should improve the identification of the vulnerability of victims during investigations, by ensuring staff complete the necessary entries on the crime reporting system.

It was also apparent that the ability of the force's crime management unit to ensure compliance with this policy lacks resilience. This is in contrast with the multi-assessments of vulnerability made by control room staff and emergency responders

⁷ The question within the PEEL inspection methodology asks "How well does the subsequent police action and work with partners keep victims safe?" HMIC has amended the heading in this report to make it clear to the reader that this section focuses on the investigation of offences involving vulnerable victims, rather than the police's initial response to vulnerable victims.

⁸ HMIC reviewed a sample of rape, burglary, offences of serious violence and actual bodily harm cases. In most forces the review consisted of 10 cases from each crime category but in some larger forces the sample was increased to 15. The file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification of vulnerability and the effectiveness of the investigation.

at earlier stages of the service provided to victims. Documented assessments should be completed throughout the investigation to alert the force to any change in circumstance, and ensure the service remains appropriate to the victim's needs.

More positively, investigation plans are used effectively by supervisors to direct investigations and ensure that all possible lines of enquiry are exhausted. It was also clear that prosecution files are assembled promptly when there is evidence to charge offenders, and there is no undue delay in them appearing before the courts.

Compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

All police forces have a statutory duty to comply with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. The Code sets out the service that victims can expect from all organisations, including the police, which have a role in the criminal justice system.

Expectations of officers concerning their obligations to victims are clear in policy documents known as standard operating procedures. These are reinforced in the force's training curriculum and were reflected in the investigators we spoke to and the investigations we reviewed.

HMIC saw evidence of contracts being agreed with victims which set out the frequency and manner of contact they expect to keep them updated on the progress made with investigations.

We found a shortcoming in relation to the force's use of victim personal statements.⁹ Frontline officers understand their importance as part of the prosecution process, but only offer them infrequently. While this may be because vulnerable victims are more likely to be supported by PPU specialists, the force should reassure itself that this facility is not being overlooked in other investigations, and that the force is fully compliant with its duties under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

Working with partners

The force works in an effective alliance with children's social care, Victim Support, and the Corporation of London's Community Safety Unit. The role of the force's vulnerable victim co-ordinator has proved pivotal in enlisting the support of these service providers to put in place prompt safeguarding¹⁰ arrangements for victims.

⁹ The victim personal statement (VPS) gives victims an opportunity to describe the wider effects of the crime upon them, express their concerns and indicate whether or not they require any support. Provisions relating to the making of a VPS and its use in criminal proceedings are included in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code), which was published on 29 October 2013 and came into force on 10 December 2013.

¹⁰ The term safeguarding means providing protection and support to ensure the safety of a vulnerable person and prevent further harm.

Best practice partnership working found in the rest of the country has been adopted, adapted and made scalable by the City of London Police to serve the needs of the City's demographics. For example, the model of multi-agency safeguarding hubs, which bring together statutory partners and the charity sector on a permanent basis in some force areas, has been adapted to work on a 'virtual' basis in the City. In this way, any of the City's partner organisations can call on the support of others when there is a need to instigate a safety or care plan for a vulnerable person.

Similarly, bespoke arrangements exist for the support of high risk-domestic abuse victims. Partnership committees known as multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)¹¹ draw together social services, housing authorities, drugs and alcohol treatment providers, the NHS, education and the probation services to consider the needs of victims. The caseload of these conferences is predictably less than elsewhere because of the lack of a resident population; nevertheless, the force has an independent domestic advisor embedded within the PPU who devises crises intervention programmes for victims who are most susceptible to being a repeat victim, or to other forms of harm. This represents a firm commitment to the needs of domestic abuse victims on behalf of the force and its partners.

How well does the force respond to and safeguard specific vulnerable groups (missing and absent & victims of domestic abuse), and how well prepared is it to tackle child sexual exploitation?

The first three questions have explained how the force identifies those that are vulnerable, the response that is provided to them and what action the force takes with partners to keep them safe. This question looks specifically at how the force deals with three specific areas of vulnerability: domestic abuse, missing and absent children and its preparedness to deal with child sexual exploitation.

Missing and absent children

The City of London Police is in a good state of preparedness to respond to children reported as missing. It is an area that places little demand on service. This is predominantly as a result of a low residential population and the fact that there are no children's homes within the City of London. Nonetheless, existing partnership arrangements are agile enough to provide support to families when incidents are reported, and officers within the PPU have trained alongside subject matter experts in the Metropolitan Police Service in case they are required for investigations.

¹¹ MARACs (multi-agency risk assessment conferences) – meetings where information about domestic abuse victims who are at risk of serious harm is shared with local partner agencies to ensure that comprehensive safeguarding measures are put in place.

Established partnership arrangements with the security industry have also been adapted to assist in the search for runaways, such as the proactive use of CCTV in areas where missing youngsters are known to gather. Additionally the force has worked with the NHS and businesses on preventive measures in areas that have become known for suicides.

Child sexual exploitation preparedness

This inspection has focused on actions and activities the force has taken to understand and identify the extent to which children are at risk of child sexual exploitation and the policies, practices and procedures it is putting in place to tackle this. It did not test the quality of how the force conducted these complex investigations with other agencies such as children's services as these issues are covered in HMIC's rolling programme of child protection inspections.

The force acknowledges that its understanding of the nature and scale of child sexual exploitation is at formative stage of development. Other forces have a more comprehensive understanding of the problem, having conducted in-depth strategic research and analysis to provide high-level insight, which is frequently referred to as a problem profile.¹² This is then used to allocate resources, define training needs and drive operational activity.

HMIC considers that the absence of such a profile in the City of London has led to an unstructured response to child sexual abuse. Establishing a problem profile would have a number of benefits. It would:

- lead to systematic enquiry with all potential sources of information to develop a clearer intelligence picture;
- bring more focus to the collective goodwill that exists with partner organisations to tackle the problem; and
- address the fact that some of the workforce does not recognise the need to be prepared to deal with child sexual exploitation, because of the low demand within the City.

This is an area of improvement for the force. It should improve the response to children at risk of sexual exploitation by ensuring its understanding of the scale and nature of the issue is developed which will better inform its preventative and investigative response; and frontline staff have an appropriate level of knowledge of the factors to identify cases and understand how to respond.

¹² A problem profile is intended to provide the City of London Police greater understanding of established and emerging crime or incident series, priority locations or other identified high-risk issues. It should be based on the research and analysis of a wide range of information sources, including information from partner organisations. It should contain recommendations for making decisions and options for action.

Officers and staff we spoke to mentioned that they had an input from the PPU about the precursor signs of child sexual exploitation, but had not received formal training on the subject matter. Preventive work was mixed; innovative work has been undertaken with the City’s hoteliers to explain how they can avoid their premises being used for sexual abuse but HMIC considers that opportunities to work collaboratively with secondary schools are underdeveloped. The force would like to improve intelligence gathering about child sexual exploitation, and plans to employ an analyst to facilitate this.

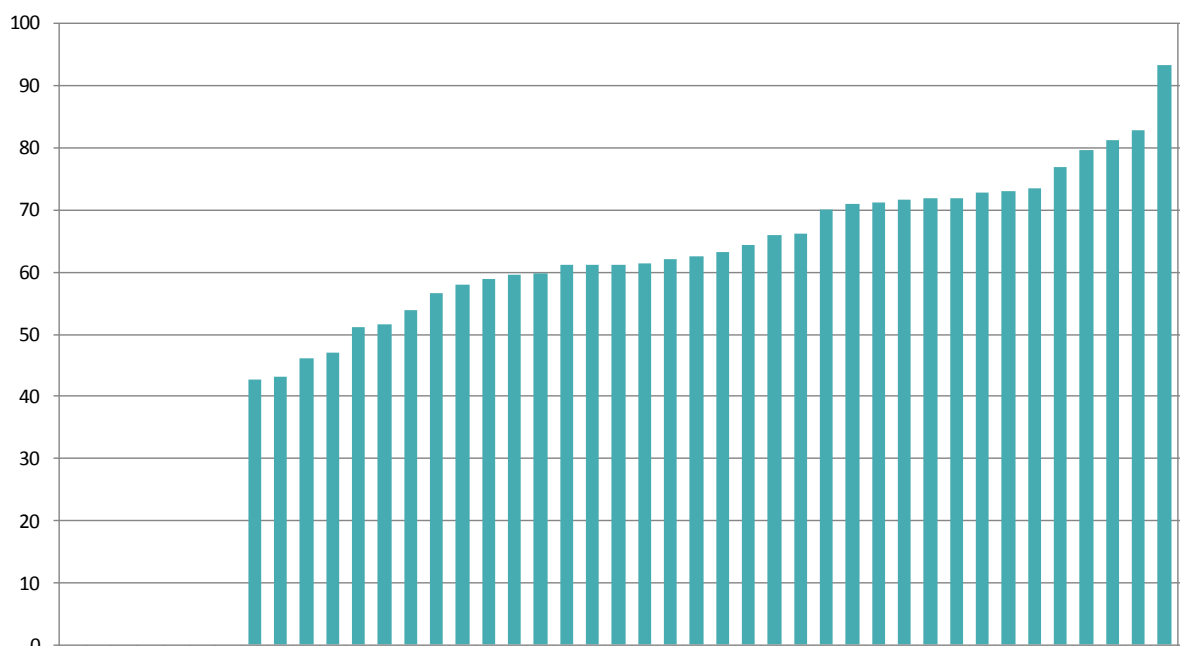
Domestic abuse

As part of a thematic inspection of domestic abuse in 2014, HMIC reported that the force demonstrated a positive approach to domestic abuse victims, many of whom did not live in the force area, and that its safeguarding plans are of a high standard.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 27 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 1 percent of all police recorded crime. Across England and Wales during the same period there was a 21 percent increase, with domestic abuse accounting for 10 percent of all police recorded crime.

The way the City of London Police records data on its crime and custody systems does not allow the force to provide data on arrest rates for domestic abuse offences. The City of London Police was one of seven forces which could not provide this data, so is not shown below in figure 2.

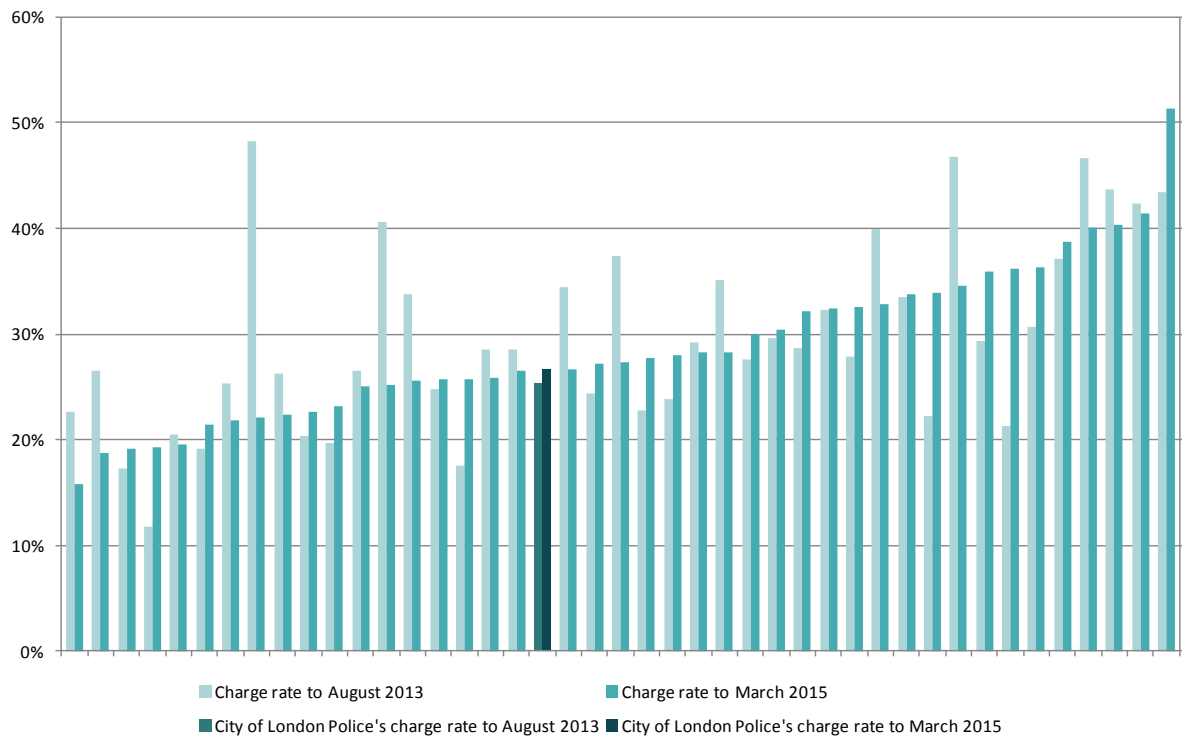
Figure 2: The number of arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes by force, for the 12 months to 31 March 2015



Source: HMIC data return

The force's charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 27 percent, the same as for England and Wales. This is an increase since the last HMIC domestic abuse inspection in 2014 when the force rate was 25 percent for the 12 months to 31 August 2013, compared with 30 percent for England and Wales.

Figure 3: Domestic abuse charge rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 compared to the 12 months to 31 August 2013



Source: HMIC data return

HMIC also examined the force's use of new legal powers to protect victims. Domestic violence protection orders were introduced in England and Wales in 2014 to prevent a suspected offender from returning to a victim's home or contacting the victim. The force has yet to make any applications to magistrates' courts for their use.

A greater force focus on offenders has seen an increase in the proportion of offenders who are arrested for domestic abuse who are taken before the courts. The force has also made a number of other positive responses to recommendations made in 2014. For instance:

- force policy has been updated to include guidance on stalking and harassment;
- a comprehensive training package for all staff has been completed;

- up-to-date intelligence on the vulnerability of victims is provided to emergency response officers;
- body-worn video camera devices are now available to record injuries to victims and the demeanour of perpetrators; and
- MARAC meetings now address the needs of high-risk victims.

An adapted use of the DASH risk identification process now guides officers on how to connect victims to domestic abuse service providers. This ensures that victim safety plans in conjunction with partner agencies can now be initiated more swiftly at a time when victims are most likely to be traumatised. This is encouraging, as expanding the means of access to support programmes for victims was an area of improvement identified in HMIC's recent inspection of crime.

HMIC also notes the force's commitment to victims even if their connection with the City stems solely from it being their place of work. Whether crimes are investigated by the City of London Police or are to be transferred to other forces, all reasonable risks are addressed and safeguarding measures are put in place. This reflects the force's objective to put victims' interests first, irrespective of in which jurisdiction the offence will be investigated.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

The chief officer team in the City of London Police has set out to the workforce a clear message that the protection of vulnerable people is a high priority.

The force is not yet adequately prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation; a comprehensive understanding of the impact and consequences of this type of abuse in the City is still in a formative stage. Considerably more progress has been made in the force's service to domestic abuse victims; officers are better trained and more solid arrangements are in place with partner organisations to safeguard victims.

Some inconsistency exists in relation to a standardised process to identify vulnerability, notably in crime investigation. The force has adopted best practice from elsewhere in the country to serve the unique policing environment of the City of London.

Extending this approach to gain a deeper insight into child sexual exploitation and tightening some operational procedures to identify vulnerability at all points in the criminal justice cycle will give assurance that the all-round service provided is good; at present it is considered to require improvement.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve the consistency and frequency of training delivered to ensure all staff have an awareness and understanding of identification of vulnerability of victims particularly at the initial point of contact.
- The force should improve the identification of the vulnerability of victims during investigations, by ensuring staff complete the necessary processes on the crime reporting system.
- The force should reassure itself that in relation to the use of victim personal statements it is fully compliant with its duties under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.
- The force should improve the response to children at risk of sexual exploitation by ensuring its understanding of the scale and nature of the issue is developed which will better inform its preventative and investigative response; and frontline staff have an appropriate level of knowledge of the factors to identify cases and understand how to respond.