

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of Dyfed-Powys Police



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Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Dyfed-Powys Police England and Wales

285

350

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

Dyfed-Powys Police England and Wales

13.7

15.8



Crime

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

Dyfed-Powys Police England and Wales

36.8

61.6

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

Dyfed-Powys Police England and Wales

+2.1%

+2.2%

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

Dyfed-Powys Police England and Wales

4.5%

10.7%

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

Dyfed-Powys Police England and Wales

9.1%

10.0%

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

Dyfed-Powys Police England and Wales

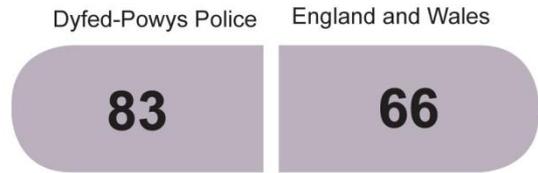
+16.2%

+20.8%



Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

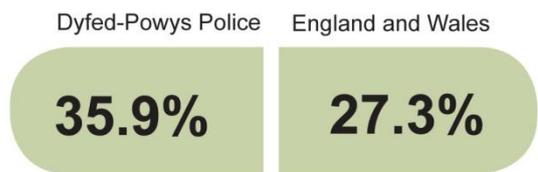


Charge rate

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

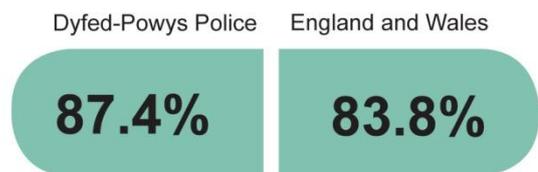


Domestic abuse charge rate as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015



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 Dyfed-Powys Police.

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

Summary



Requires improvement

Dyfed-Powys Police's approach to protecting from harm those who are vulnerable and supporting victims requires improvement.

Dyfed-Powys Police has a good understanding of its crime trends and patterns and has made progress in the identification of vulnerable victims. The force has established processes to support vulnerable people and is working well with partners to ensure that victims are protected.

The force has a team of well-motivated and experienced staff who answer 999 and 101 (non-emergency) calls in the force contact centre. However, the force is not consistently applying new procedures to understand the vulnerability of callers, although the needs of the victim are a clear priority.

We found across the force a common understanding that the force has moved away from a service preoccupied solely with preventing crime and prosecuting offenders to one that focuses on the victim. Officers and staff to whom we spoke had a caring attitude towards victims, with a genuine desire to do the best they could for vulnerable people.

Dyfed-Powys Police works with external partners and shares information to provide an effective, integrated safeguarding¹ response to victims. The force has invested in increasing the number of specialist staff available to work with partner agencies to increase support to vulnerable people.

HMIC notes that the force has responded positively to the previous inspection of domestic abuse and had made good progress in implementing change. However, when investigating offences, the force should do more to ensure that domestic abuse victims receive a service from officers with the rights skills and experience.

The force has a comprehensive missing persons policy which draws on national police and Home Office guidance. The policy is further strengthened by the All Wales child protection procedures and missing persons protocol.

¹ Safeguarding means providing protection and support to ensure the safety of a vulnerable person and prevent further harm.

The inspection only considered how well-prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. The force was subject to an inspection of its child protection services. The more detailed findings from that inspection, published in February 2015,² should be read in conjunction with this inspection report.

The force's protection of vulnerable people and the support it provides for victims are improving. However, it needs to do more to ensure a consistent approach at the first point of contact with the public, and to make more effective use of its investigative resources to provide better support to domestic abuse victims.

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

Dyfed-Powys Police has procedures in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims who request police assistance through the force's contact centre. Operators in the centre are trained to identify vulnerability. This includes gathering key information from callers to establish the circumstances of each case and assessing the level of risk presented to any person identified in each call.

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.

² *National Child Protection Inspections - Dyfed-Powys Police*, HMIC, February 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/dyfed-powys-national-child-protection-inspection/

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, is available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/vulnerable-adults/

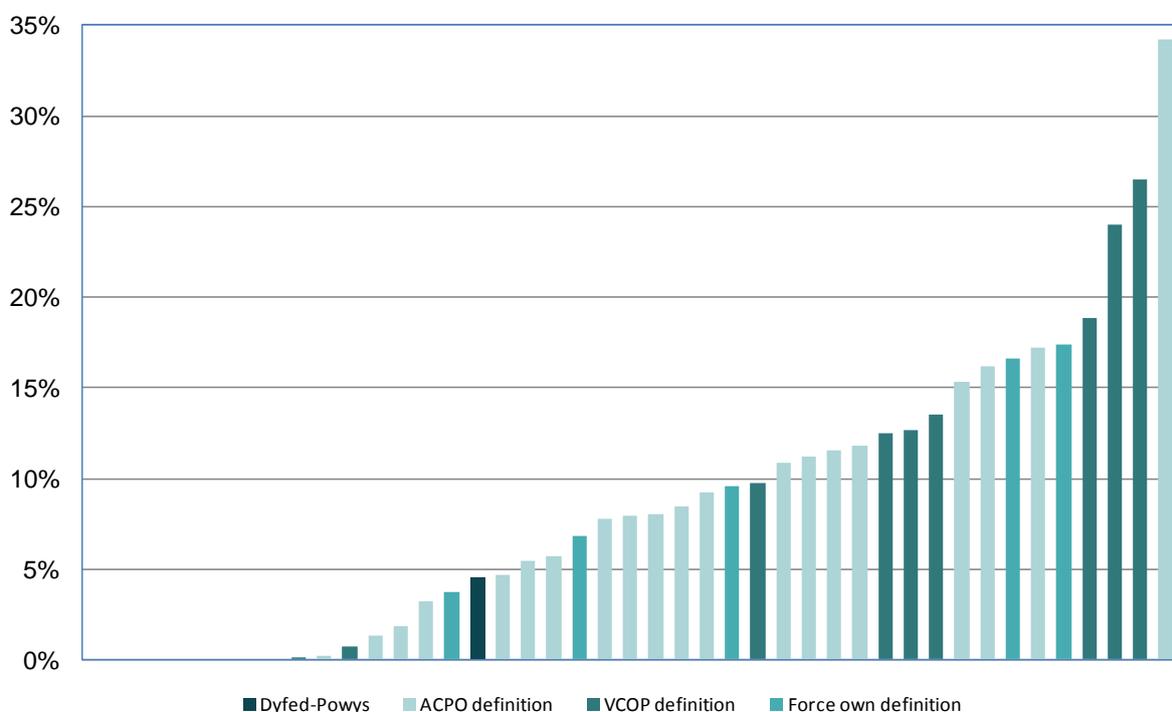
Dyfed-Powys uses the definition from VCOP and defines vulnerability as:

“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:
 - 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, 4.5 percent of all recorded crimes in Dyfed-Powys Police 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 whether a victim is vulnerable on crime recording systems 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

Assessing levels of risk and need

The force manages its receipt of 999 and 101 calls on software known as System for Tasking and Operational Resource Management (STORM). This software retains information from previous incidents at those locations where there has been a police attendance involving vulnerable people. The force cannot currently add markers to STORM to notify an operator if an address is associated with a particular vulnerable person. HMIC is aware of other forces that have upgraded STORM to overcome this and have a more assured process of identifying vulnerable people.

Dyfed-Powys Police is investing in new technology to provide better identification of, and support to, vulnerable victims. It has successfully rolled-out hand-held mobile devices which give emergency response officers direct access to details of victims and perpetrators. The force also plans to issue body-worn video camera devices to record injuries and the behaviour of perpetrators by the end of 2015. These measures mean that officers are more aware of the needs of victims and that the quality of evidence to support prosecutions will improve.

The call centre operates a system whereby call takers have a responsibility to record the details of the initial contact with callers. They then forward the incident to intelligence-researchers and call-despatchers to consider the appropriate police response. We are concerned that call-takers are unable to conduct further research on the incident, which may result in an incomplete understanding of the victim's requirements at the first point of contact.

We also understand that some call takers periodically resolve incidents without making an entry on STORM at all. In some circumstances it is appropriate to conclude matters at the first point of contact, but when this happens without records being made, repeated calls from the same individual or from the same location may not be automatically linked. This could potentially mean that the force assesses inaccurately the severity of a situation and does not provide callers with the level of service they need.

The force has nearly completed the development of a comprehensive demand management tool. This enables a real-time picture not only of the availability of police resources, but also easily accessible information about a caller's previous contact history with the force, which is especially relevant for repeat and vulnerable callers.

The tool is intuitive to use, with a simple interface, and is available as a web-based application to all staff via the force intranet. This allows the force to plot crime trends, and to identify repeat victims and repeat callers whom the force may not have otherwise identified. As well as enabling the force to align resources with emerging crime trends more accurately, it also indicates the victims who are likely to need the greatest support from Dyfed-Powys Police.

HMIC found little evidence that staff in the contact centre understand the force's definition of vulnerability. However, staff have a good practical grasp of the types of events and circumstances that can lead to an increased risk of harm, and take appropriate action to safeguard victims.

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

HMIC found that in Dyfed-Powys Police, the requirements of vulnerable victims is well understood.

The force understands well the needs of people who are vulnerable because of domestic abuse, and it generally responds well to them. Force procedures are clear, officers receive frequent training and incidents are subject to effective supervision.

The force's response to the needs of missing and absent⁵ individuals is equally established.

Dyfed-Powys Police and its partner agencies have adopted effectively All Wales Child Protection procedures and Barnardo's Cymru's Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework to safeguard children at risk of sexual abuse.

HMIC also acknowledges the force's resolve to invest in new investigative teams and adjust operating procedures to ensure that emerging threats and the priority to support vulnerable victims are properly resourced. To this end the force has:

- expanded its Protecting Vulnerable People Unit, responsible for investigating crime associated with vulnerable victims, by 22 officers;
- recruited additional domestic abuse officers, who play a pivotal role in co-ordinating the support of partner organisations to safeguard high-risk victims; and
- secured support from the charity Barnardo's to work with young boys and girls at risk of child sexual exploitation.

⁵ A person is classified as absent if they are not where they are expected to be but they are not considered to be at risk. Whereas, if they are classified as missing the police are obliged to take steps to locate them, as the level of perceived risk is higher.

How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?⁶

HMIC found good evidence to support our judgment that the culture within the force is one of putting the victim first and prioritising the needs of vulnerable people.

Response officers

We found that frontline staff are well-prepared to deal with initial scene attendance and investigation of cases involving vulnerable victims. All frontline staff receive comprehensive training for dealing with domestic abuse cases and yearly refresher training is also available. This is encouraging because when HMIC inspected domestic abuse in 2014, we highlighted training as an area for improvement. Updates in procedure, policy and the law are also explained in force-wide bulletins issued by Dyfed-Powys Police.

The force has three well-defined risk assessment processes. The domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH)⁷ risk assessment is used by frontline staff in domestic abuse cases to determine the level of risk of harm to a victim. The force employs a similar risk assessment tool for anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases and missing persons. Their consistent use assures HMIC that the needs of vulnerable individuals are properly identified, which gives the force a head start in providing the best possible service to them.

Feedback from the independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs)⁸ confirmed to us that officers are aware of the range of protective options at their disposal and use these effectively to safeguard victims. An example was officers' use of safety support plans, tailored to individual victim's needs with flexibility built in to upgrade them should circumstances change.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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

⁸ IDVAs (independent domestic abuse advisors) are advocates who work separately from the police to address the safety of victims (and their children) who are at high risk of harm from intimate partners, former partners and family members.

Supervision of response to vulnerable victims

We found that the force has clear supervisory procedures for initial contact with domestic abuse victims and for people reporting people missing. DASH risk assessments are presented to sergeants for ratification and HMIC saw examples of where the assessment was changed to reflect concerns raised by supervisors. Sergeants and inspectors also take an active role in ensuring that the right safeguarding measures are put in place in the immediate aftermath of a domestic abuse allegation.

Risk assessments for persons reported as missing are the responsibility of the duty inspector. The initial assessment is made at the point of first contact with the force and it is reappraised when attending officers are given a first account of the circumstances. Missing persons investigations remain the responsibility of inspectors who direct sergeants to make the necessary lines of enquiry. In cases of high-risk missing persons the senior on-call officer for the force supervises the investigation.

HMIC also saw effective follow-up interventions to pursue known offenders. Each day the force details officers to track down high-risk domestic abuse offenders who have not been arrested, and any new investigative leads which might help locate missing persons are acted upon. This means that sustained effort is made to tackle perpetrators and remove individuals from potential harm.

How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners to keep victims safe?⁹

Dyfed-Powys Police is served by four local authorities and adapts well to different working practices in each. We found clear, well established protocols (All-Wales protocols) in place for the sharing of information across agencies, for example confidentiality clauses are signed at the beginning of partner meetings. Dyfed-Powys Police operates effectively with partner organisations on a force-wide basis, at county level as well as in individual neighbourhoods.

Officers are working side by side with mental health nurses, to make better use of police time and to provide a better service to vulnerable people. Force analysis identified that those suffering from dementia and mental health were being frequently taken to hospitals for assessments when alternative support was available.

⁹ 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.

Nurses are now directly available to consider an individual's needs and alternative resolutions are being found which can be as straightforward as asking a relative to provide help. This joint venture means that better care is being provided and mental health sufferers are less likely to be exposed to harm.

HMIC observed partnership committees known as multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)¹⁰ in Dyfed Powys. These fora draw together social services, housing authorities, drugs and alcohol treatment providers, NHS Wales, education and probation services to consider victims' needs and address the offending behaviour of domestic abuse perpetrators. The force has forged strong relationships with partner agencies, which ensures that MARACs are attended by senior representatives who are empowered to commit resources and remain accountable for the measures put in place to support victims. As a consequence, HMIC believes that the interests of high-risk domestic abuse victims are well-served in Dyfed-Powys.

Investigation of crime involving vulnerable people

HMIC examined the case files of a sample of investigations¹¹ in which vulnerable victims were identified. HMIC also interviewed investigators in specialist investigative units and frontline officers who also investigate crime.

We found that the standard of the service provided to victims was not as good during the course of an investigation as it was at the time of incident and its immediate aftermath.

We also found that vulnerability is identified in those crimes traditionally associated with vulnerability (i.e. domestic abuse) but was overlooked in other cases. This may mean that the force may not identify individuals who are repeatedly targeted with lower-level offending as part of a wider pattern of victimisation.

In specialist investigative units we saw evidence of frequent supervision. The force uses investigation plans with clearly-defined timescales and lines of enquiry to track and monitor the progress of investigations.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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 vulnerability and the effectiveness of the investigation.

In more frequently occurring crimes investigated by non-specialist officers, standards were not as assured. From the officers we spoke to, HMIC is satisfied that sergeants play an active role in investigations, but supervisory entries on crime reports are less apparent. To be certain that all investigations are supervised rigorously, the force should consider ensuring that it records all supervision.

Despite this, HMIC found that the force's crime investigations are characterised generally by a determination to exhaust all investigative leads and bring offenders to justice.

Compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime

All police forces have a statutory duty to comply with the code 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.

HMIC spoke to Dyfed-Powys officers and found that generally they accept that addressing the needs of the victim is an integral part of a successful investigation. Standards of compliance with the codes, particularly keeping the victims up-to-date with the progress of the enquiry, are reflected better in investigations conducted by specialist officers than by non-specialist investigators.

HMIC found that officers have a good understanding of victim personal statements,¹² and how they should be used. These statements make courts aware of the psychological impact of becoming a victim. In domestic abuse cases these are used frequently, and to good effect, but elsewhere we found less evidence of their use.

Similarly, HMIC found that the force does not consistently discuss the availability of special measures with vulnerable victims, such as a facility to give evidence on a video link rather than attending court. Again, we saw evidence of these being used in crimes traditionally associated with vulnerability but staff were less certain about their wider application. This is disappointing, as better compliance with the code of practice was highlighted as an area for improvement in HMIC's crime inspection in 2014.

We note that the provisions for victim personal statements and special measures are included in the force's training curriculum. The challenge for Dyfed-Powys Police is to reinforce their importance at an operational level.

¹² 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.

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 to investigate crimes and to work with partners to keep victims 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.

The strategic lead of the protection of vulnerable people rests with the force's Protecting Vulnerable Persons Unit (PVPU). The unit is situated at the force's headquarters but has operational units based in all of Dyfed-Powys' counties. PVPU officers work alongside neighbourhood teams, 999 responders and investigative teams which are geographically situated throughout the force area.

The strategic role of the PVPU includes policy development and the publication of operational procedure. It includes a pivotal safeguarding function and investigates some, but not all, crimes committed against vulnerable people. When other officers investigate crime under the remit of the PVPU, investigative support is provided by PVPU officers as subject matter experts.

Missing and absent children

The force has a comprehensive missing persons policy which draws on national police-approved professional practice and Home Office guidance. It is strengthened by the All Wales child protection procedures and missing persons protocol. The force gives clear guidance to operational staff, which spans from the moment an individual is reported as missing to the point when the person returns and the circumstances of the disappearance are discussed with a view to providing support to vulnerable people.

The force has recently standardised operating procedures when persons are first reported as missing. The senior control room supervisor now completes a risk assessment to determine the likelihood of the individual's personal safety being endangered. This has addressed previous inconsistencies in assessing risk and provides a sound platform to determine who is best placed to investigate the case on the basis of skills, experience and training.

Additional safeguards are provided by virtue of the All Wales protocol. This requires joint agency case conferences to devise a care plan for all children reported missing three times or more in a year. In respect of other children reported missing, case conferences take place if discussions on the child's return, known as de-briefs, identify an exposure to harm. Recognising that de-briefs would be completed better

by qualified child practitioners, the force is currently seeking tenders for this service and will transfer this responsibility to professionals from the charity sector in the near future.

For the calendar year 2014 Dyfed-Powys Police recorded 1,038 missing reports relating to children (under 18). Of those reports, 520 individual children were reported missing, 365 of whom were reported missing once, 114 reported missing on 2–4 occasions, 25 reported missing on 5–7 occasions and 16 reported missing on eight or more occasions. In recognition of these figures, the force has developed an accord with children's homes whereby a child's lifestyle habits, friendship networks and other characteristics are shared with the force when the child is first accommodated. This means in the event of a child going missing, the force can make more-informed efforts to trace the child.

Preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation

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 has made a good start in ensuring that it is prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation. An in-depth problem profile¹³ comprising data from the police and other partner agencies is near completion. This has been drawn up in accordance with the Home Office, Welsh Assembly and other national best practice guidelines.

An operational response to the profile, codenamed Operation Celtic, sets out a step-by-step implementation programme that includes raising awareness, training, partner engagement, safeguarding and enforcement. Although the force has not formally launched Operation Celtic, many of the goals it sets out to achieve are already explicit in the force's current day-to-day activity.

Legislative procedures have been established for more than ten years within the All Wales Child Protection procedures to safeguard children. Additionally, Barnardo's Cymru launched its Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) in 2006 which supports specifically children who are at risk of being sexually abused in Wales. The problem profile identifies a link between 'looked after' children and their susceptibility of being coerced into sexual activity. The force already has in-house support from Barnardo's to screen children at potential risk and the enhanced de-

¹³ A problem profile is intended to provide the force 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.

briefs of missing children provides a direct link into SERAF. We saw an example of a girl moving into a children’s home in Dyfed-Powys who had been victimised by predatory sex offenders in England. Joint working between children’s homes and Dyfed-Powys Police made it possible to identify the potential harm to this individual and a joint safety plan was implemented.

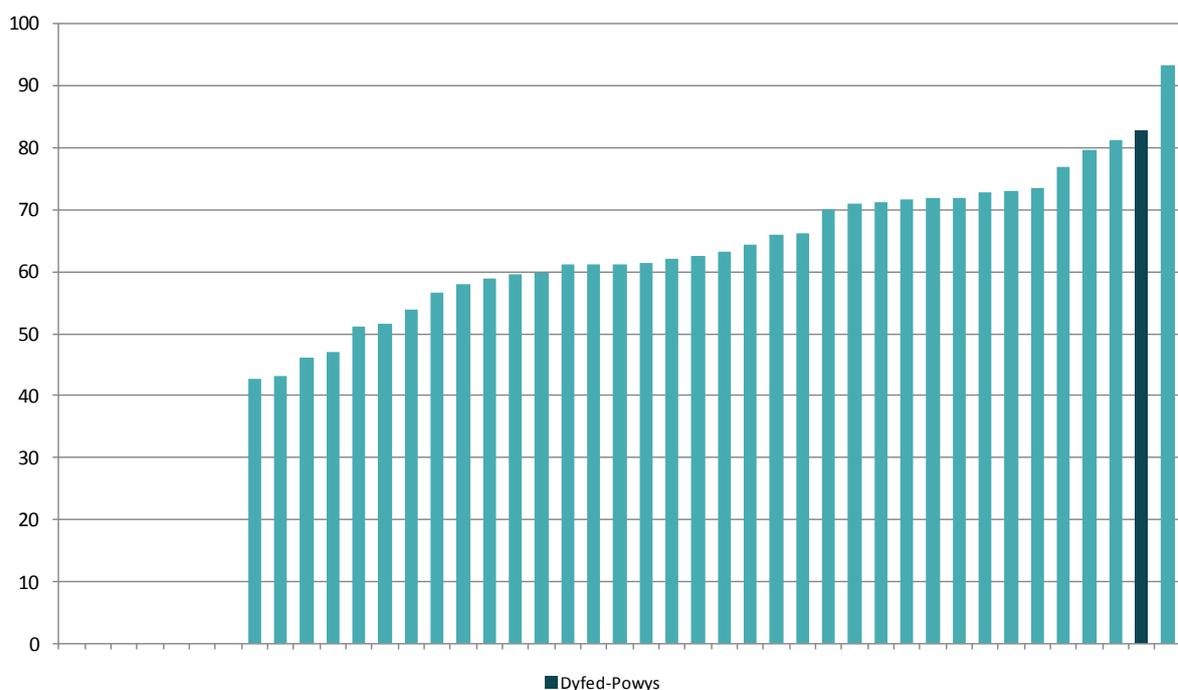
Dyfed-Powys Police is becoming increasingly aware of individuals or networks that are likely to prey on vulnerable girls. Precursor signs of offending range from making demands to share sexually explicit photographs to threats to publish photographs on social media if victims do not succumb to approaches for sex. To prevent and disrupt this form of coercive abuse, the force has begun a campaign to issue warning notices to young men who habitually keep the company of young girls in circumstances which cause concern.

Domestic abuse

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 16 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 9 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.

As shown in figure 2, for every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded Dyfed-Powys made 83 arrests.

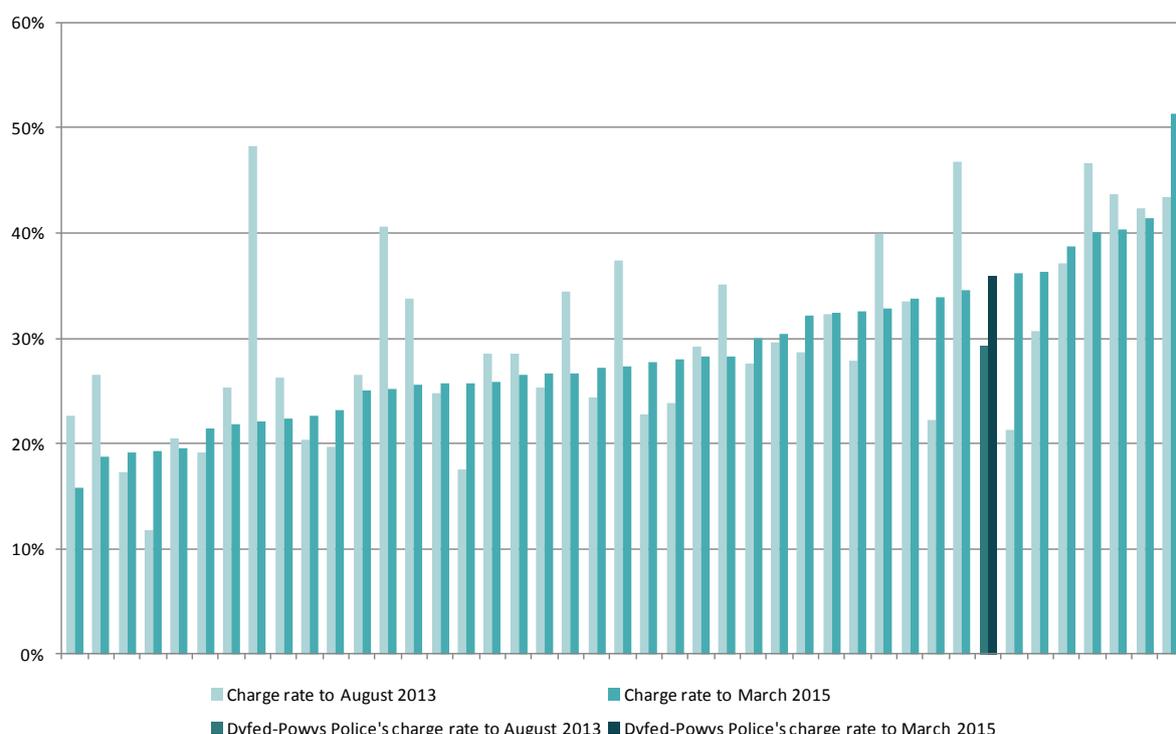
Figure 2: The number of arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes by force, for the 12 months to 31 March 2015



Source: HMIC data return

The force's charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 36 percent, compared with 27 percent for England and Wales. This is an increase since the last HMIC domestic abuse inspection when the force rate was 29 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 (DVPO) 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 began using DVPOs in May 2014; it made 16 applications to magistrates' courts for their use, all of which were granted. Two DVPOs have been breached. Breaches occur when the offender fails to comply with the condition of the order and is taken back before the magistrates' court. This represents a DVPO breach rate of 13 percent compared with the England and Wales rate of 17 percent.¹⁴

We found that the force has responded positively to HMIC's domestic abuse inspection in 2014. The force has since made significant improvements such as increasing the number of its specialist domestic abuse officers, funding additional independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) posts, developing an app to submit

¹⁴ The England and Wales figure is based on data provided by 35 forces.

digital risk assessments from handheld devices and training all staff in their roles and responsibilities. Balanced against this, we found that there are still some areas for improvement.

At the point of first contact, domestic abuse victims are risk-assessed and categorised as being of high, medium or standard risk. Previously, call handlers have relied on a series of set questions to enable them to determine the level of risk. This is no longer used and the force now relies on a decision-making model known as THRIVE.¹⁵

Following interviews with control room staff and listening to several recorded 999 calls made to the force, HMIC is not assured that THRIVE is as systematically embedded as a risk-assessment tool as supervisors thought. The removal of call handlers' question sets and the inconsistent application of the THRIVE principles has led to an over-reliance on the use of professional judgement in the assessment of risk. Control room staff have all been recently trained in the use of THRIVE, but the force must now embark on a programme of quality assurance to ensure it is delivering a consistent service to callers.

HMIC's concern was offset to some extent by the force's policy immediately to deploy officers to all victims of domestic abuse, irrespective of whether the initial risk assessment was high, medium or standard. The prompt arrival of officers within the target response time of twenty minutes means that it is unlikely that victim needs will be overlooked. However, for HMIC to be assured that the force standardises procedures to identify vulnerability, it needs to undertake further work to strengthen the understanding of the THRIVE decision-making model.

Dyfed-Powys Police investigations of domestic abuse cases have also improved markedly since HMIC's inspection in 2014. The force is now seeing the benefits of its endeavour to strengthen procedures to prosecute perpetrators, prevent re-offending and safeguard victims. A renewed force focus on offenders is characterised by increased prosecution rates, greater use of civil and criminal powers to curb offending behaviour (for example domestic violence protection orders, restraining and non-molestation orders) and the relentless pursuit of offenders who seek to evade arrest.

Despite this progress, HMIC believe better ways should be found to align investigative resources with domestic abuse cases. While force standards are clear and the expectations placed upon investigators are well-known, most domestic abuse cases are undertaken by officers who are not accredited to higher-tier investigation levels. For example, standard risk cases remain with local officers and may not be reviewed or reassessed by a specialist. There may be complex elements

¹⁵ The THRIVE concept assesses threat, harm, risk, investigation opportunities, the vulnerability of the victim and the engagement level required to resolve the incident.

within these investigations, for example where victims are subjected to controlling or coercive behaviour, which may benefit from specialist input. Also relevant to this concern is the fact that most of these investigations are managed by emergency response officers, whose investigations are generally subject to less intense supervision.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Dyfed-Powys Police has a strong ethic to protect vulnerable people, which is led by a hands-on approach from the top of the force and with good support from partners.

However, we identified areas for improvement in 999 or 101 call-handling procedures and a lack of professional expertise in the investigation of some domestic abuse cases. For these reasons, the force's performance is judged to require improvement.

The force needs to review its recent training of call handlers to understand why staff are not using new procedures to identify risk at the first point of contact with the force.

The force is investing more in specialist investigators. It envisages that its accredited detectives will be able to provide a service to more vulnerable victims than is currently the case.

In a wider context, the force has made sustainable improvements. Notably, risk assessments completed by emergency response officers are now more consistent and a greater force focus on offenders has led to more perpetrators being prosecuted.

The force subscribes to 'All Wales' protocols for standards of investigations in relations to missing children and those who are susceptible to child sexual abuse. Dyfed-Powys Police works in a strong alliance with Barnardo's and other partner organisations to ensure that effective safeguarding measures are put in place for the most vulnerable.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its initial assessment and response to incidents involving vulnerable people by ensuring that staff working in call handling understand and apply the THRIVE decision-making model, and are supervised effectively. The force should also review its approach to not consistently making a record of contact when cases have been resolved at initial contact, specifically the impact this can have on the force's understanding of and response to repeat victims.
- The force should improve its investigation of cases involving vulnerable victims specifically in relation to investigations conducted by non-specialist staff and the recording of supervision.
- The force should improve its compliance with the duties under the code of practice for victims of crime specifically in relation to victim personal statements and the use of special measures.
- The force should improve its investigation of domestic abuse cases by ensuring officers and staff with the appropriate professional skills and experience investigate cases, specifically complex cases, and that these investigations are supervised effectively.