

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of Lincolnshire Police



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Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales

228

350

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales

14.1

15.8



Crime

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales

48.2

61.6

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales

-1.9%

+2.2%

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales

1.3%

10.7%

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales

7.3%

10.0%

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales

+15.5%

+20.8%



Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales



Charge rate

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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales



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

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Lincolnshire Police

England and Wales



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 Lincolnshire Police.

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

Summary



Requires improvement

Lincolnshire Police is generally good at identifying vulnerable people and often responds well to meet the needs of victims who are vulnerable. However, there are important areas where improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent and vulnerable people, particularly children, are kept safe. Given the scale of the challenge in this area and risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall, the force requires improvement.

HMIC acknowledges that the force has committed significant effort and resources to offer a high-quality service to the public in this area and it is committed to enhancing even more those teams who investigate and work with partners to keep vulnerable people safe. Protecting the most vulnerable is clearly a priority for force senior leaders and the police and crime commissioner. The force needs to prioritise resources appropriately if it is to give further confidence to the public that the force identifies early the risk of harm to vulnerable people, and that the service it provides is of a consistently high quality service.

The force generally identifies repeat and vulnerable victims and responds well to them. It also investigates crime committed against the most vulnerable victims well, with generally the right level of expertise involved in the right complexity of investigation. However, HMIC is concerned that the right level of specialist expertise is not always involved in complex cases involving domestic abuse and children.

Those attending domestic abuse incidents have a good knowledge of how to assess risk and to keep victims safe. They can refer to a helpful booklet and check list to ensure they carry out these processes properly and are well supervised doing so.

Work between professionals, including those from partner organisations, in the safe team and the central referral unit helps keep children safe, providing effective attention towards increased levels of risk. Staff throughout the force show a positive attitude towards protecting those who are vulnerable from harm and supporting victims.

However, the force does not have a co-ordinated or consistently well-supervised process for responding to reports that children are missing or absent.¹ Understanding the scale and nature of the issue is under-developed which means the response to missing children is inconsistent and frontline staff and supervisors do not always identify risk factors associated with missing children and the potential links to child sexual exploitation. Systems designed to support the management of cases are not well used and this means that investigating and safeguarding opportunities may be missed and, for example, in persistent cases ensuring information is used from previous missing episodes to develop a co-ordinated and prioritised response.

This inspection considered how well prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. Lincolnshire Police has made a fairly good start in ensuring it is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation but it must now build on this to ensure that this ambition translates into consistent operational practice.

¹ A person is classified as absent if they are not where they are expected to be but they are not considered 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. In Lincolnshire, force policy is that no child 12 years old or under will be treated as 'absent'.

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

The force is committed strongly to improving the service it provides to vulnerable people. The force's 2015-17 operational policing plan focuses on protecting the most vulnerable but this is not yet the main focus for all officers and staff. The chief officer team is providing clear leadership on what needs to change, by working in partnership, understanding, communicating with and supporting those who are most vulnerable, and providing an enhanced service to those who are most vulnerable.

The force recognises that to provide a different, more tailored response to vulnerable people, it first needs to identify them correctly as such, and then understand which services would best meet their particular needs.

Identifying those who are vulnerable

Lincolnshire Police can identify repeat and vulnerable victims when they first contact the police. The force's IT systems automatically flag-up linked incidents to give the call-taker a history of previous calls which helps him or her identify vulnerability. The IT system also attaches critical register markers to an address to raise the profile of individuals who are vulnerable and need protecting.

Forces define vulnerability in different ways. The majority of forces use either the definition from the government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime² or that referred to in ACPO guidance.³ Nine forces use their own definition or a combination of these definitions.

Lincolnshire uses the definition from the ACPO guidance and defines a vulnerable adult as:

“Any person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental, physical, or learning disability, age or illness AND is or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.”

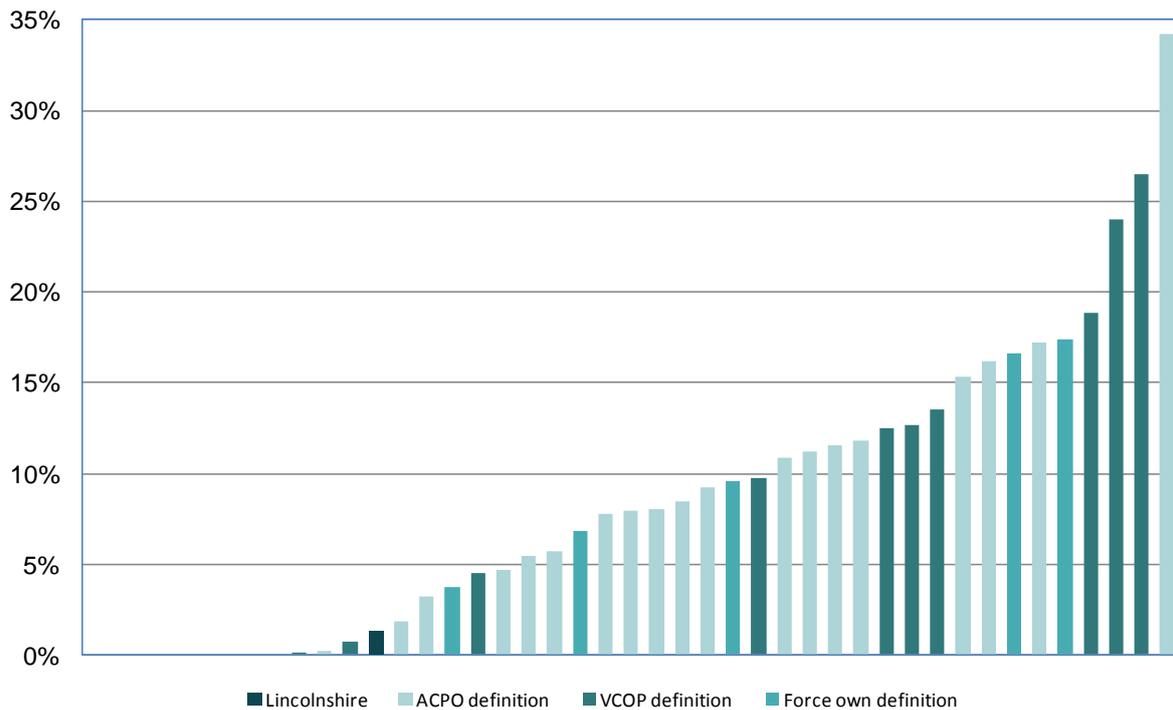
The proportion of crime recorded which involves a vulnerable victim varies considerably between forces, from 0.03 percent to 34.3 percent. For the year to 31 March 2015, 1.3 percent of all recorded crimes in Lincolnshire were identified as

² 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

³ 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/

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. In Lincolnshire Police this decision is made by the officer investigating the case who may not always record this, which means that the force may not always be properly identifying vulnerable victims of crimes.

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

HMIC found that the force has trained staff who answer 999 calls to spot the signs of someone who might be vulnerable in some way. Call-takers have access to additional sources of information held in other databases. There is also support from an intelligence support officer who also assists with gathering relevant information so that response officers have the full picture prior to attendance at an incident.

Assessing levels of risk and need

Lincolnshire Police ensures that the response to the victim is based on the victim's needs rather than the type of crime, which is good practice. It has done this by implementing a structured assessment based on the levels of threat, harm, risk and vulnerability (THRIVE)⁴ faced by the victim, rather than simply by the type of incident

⁴ A decision model known as THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerable and engagement), which helps staff to assess threat and risk and decide how best to resolve a call.

or crime being reported in order to help staff determine the appropriate level of response to a call.

HMIC listened to a small number of calls from those reporting domestic abuse and found an effective and victim centred response from call handlers. Public sector partners also reported to us that victims felt that when they called the police, the response from the call takers is helpful and supportive.

Supervisors of staff who answer 999 calls check effectively that the risk faced by a victim is properly recognised and assessed. This is a relatively new way of working introduced in March 2015. This means that the process is not yet fully established with all call-takers, and the force plans to provide follow-up training.

Where the risk to a victim is assessed as high, the central referral unit liaises with other organisations that may have information about the vulnerable person and advises immediately on appropriate action. Staff in the control room also have access to mental health professionals who identify the right support and respond to calls as they come in. Over the last year this has led to an increase in risk care plans and safeguarding⁵ actions. Local leadership teams also review all new incidents involving vulnerable victims at a daily management meeting, to ensure the risk assessment is appropriate and that the right investigative and safeguarding action is happening in response. However, while the force understands crime trends and patterns in relation to serious acquisitive crime⁶ and drug-related offences, it does not yet sufficiently monitor child sexual exploitation and missing and absent children.

⁵ The term safeguarding means providing protection and support to ensure the safety of the vulnerable person and prevent further harm.

⁶ Serious acquisitive crime is defined as domestic burglary, car crime (theft of or from a vehicle), and robbery.

This means that knowledge across the force of these issues is evolving and sometimes the right people are not sent to deal with the right incidents equipped with the right information.

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

Lincolnshire Police identifies that the demand to provide a policing service to protect the most vulnerable is increasing and that the requirements of some vulnerable groups in Lincolnshire are better understood than others.

The force has a good understanding of the needs of people who are vulnerable because of domestic abuse, and it responds well to them. This understanding is based on a strong mix of local analysis and reference to national guidance, and partner agencies and the voluntary sector are appropriately involved in the response.

Lincolnshire does not have a well-established understanding of and response to the needs of missing and absent people.

The force is still developing its approach to tackling child sexual exploitation. A recent evaluation by the Lincolnshire safeguarding children's board⁷ made recommendations to understand better the scale of child sexual exploitation, on which the force is now acting.

To provide the most appropriate support to vulnerable victims, the force has invested more resource into parts of its organisation which work to keep them safe. This has led to the very positive step of the creation or enhancement of new teams and structures, including a new multi-agency safe team, which brings together staff and partners responsible for safeguarding victims with those who carry out specialist investigations into child sexual exploitation;

In addition, there is now a central referral unit, which is a single point for police and partner referrals and an internet child abuse team, which will shortly be expanded (in recognition of the growing risk of children being sexually exploited online). The constabulary also has advanced plans to establish a new unit to deal with offences of grooming children for child sexual exploitation.

⁷ Safeguarding Children boards have a statutory duty to co-ordinate how agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?⁸

Lincolnshire Police responds well to vulnerable victims. It has clear and well understood systems in place to ensure that the police response to vulnerable victims is appropriate and reflects their needs. These include access to mental health professionals to help recognise particular issues and respond appropriately, and a risk assessment process which helps to identify and support victims of anti-social behaviour.

The new THRIVE model is intended to ensure that the response to vulnerability across all areas of policing improves. This change is supported by senior officers but its application and understanding by all staff needs to translate into a consistently high-quality service across all aspects of the force.

Response officers

Officers who respond to vulnerable people take a victim-centred approach and are generally knowledgeable. Those attending domestic abuse incidents are able to assess risk and keep victims safe, and can refer to a helpful booklet and checklist to ensure they carry out this process properly. This booklet contains details of where to access specialist support services, the victim's reference number, and the officer's contact information. All this information is provided to the victim at the time of the report and ensures the victim understands what action has been taken by the officer to keep them safe.

Frontline staff are aware of the immediate safeguarding options available to them for victims. These include installation of panic alarms, allocation of quick response mobile phones, and the facility to re-locate vulnerable victims immediately.

Officers are less knowledgeable about where to obtain specialist advice in relation to other types of incidents, such as child sexual exploitation. Student officers and those recently promoted receive training on domestic abuse, missing and absent people and child sexual exploitation but we found that continually available training for other staff in respect of these areas is more limited. We saw a good example of domestic abuse and safeguarding training in the east area of the force, and the force plans to provide this training to other areas to ensure a consistent level of service to victims across Lincolnshire. The force has a learning zone on its intranet, which has a number of useful documents including the 'safeguarding matters' bulletin which recently highlighted other important vulnerability issues. Specialist staff know where to find this information but frontline staff are less aware.

⁸ 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 response to vulnerable victims, rather than the overall police response to vulnerable victims.

Supervision of the response to vulnerable victims

The force's crime management bureau allocates for a response those crimes that are not initially attended by a response officer. The time taken for this response has significantly reduced to no more than three days, which is a significant improvement over the last year. However, frontline supervisors still report some delays which they perceive contribute to a loss of investigative opportunities.

Supervisors play an active role in checking and approving the risk assessment process. For instance, they are notified by the control room of all new incidents of domestic abuse. They then check the risk assessment conducted by the response officer, and check the quality of the investigation before it is handed over to another team, such as the criminal investigation department (CID). This ensures that the quality of service remains high and that activity to investigate the incident is pursued.

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

In HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, we found that the force needed to improve the investigation of crimes committed against vulnerable people and how they were kept safe. Since this inspection we found that Lincolnshire has improved its investigative standards including an increased use of investigation plans and better supervisory oversight in specialist teams. However, some investigations dealt with by the CID and response teams still have inconsistencies. These include, for example, safety plans not being recorded in standard and medium-risk domestic abuse cases, and gaps in understanding third-party support networks or legal support for restraining orders.

HMIC's assessment of case file workloads across frontline staff, CID and public protection found that these were appropriate in response and CID teams. However, there is significant pressure in the teams who investigate serious sexual offences, including rape, and an increasing workload in the safe team, which means that investigations may take longer than necessary. The force recognises the need to allocate more resources to protect the most vulnerable. It plans to reallocate resources and staff to create either new units or bolster existing units, for example the new grooming unit and an extended internet child abuse team.

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.

Investigation of crimes involving vulnerable people

The force gives careful consideration to the accreditation, experience and leadership of specialist investigative units, for example rape and sexual offences, the safe team and child and vulnerable adult abuse units. Qualified detectives with enhanced qualifications work alongside and teach trainee detectives in teams which are subject to oversight by supervisors.

HMIC reviewed a number of investigations,¹⁰ some of which were identified as involving a vulnerable victim. Generally the right staff with the right skills had been allocated quickly to these cases, and the resulting investigations were of a high standard, clearly focused on the needs of the victim.

The force's approach to the allocation of crime is determined by a categorisation based on the type of crime and its complexity. This has advantages in that certain crimes, for example rape, are investigated by specialist teams of highly-accredited, closely-supervised detectives who are supported by victim advocates and specialist case lawyers. The force recognises that its investigation of all crimes involving vulnerable people and young people must be well-supervised so that the risk and complexity of a case is identified correctly, the right people can investigate and all opportunities to keep those who are vulnerable safe are taken.

Compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime

Victims should also be kept updated about the progress of their case. In Lincolnshire Police we found several examples of supervisors routinely monitoring victim contact and putting enhanced entitlements in place, for example offering a screen when they give evidence in court, for those considered to have greater needs.

All police forces have a statutory duty to comply with the code of practice for victims of crime, which sets out the service victims of crime can expect from all parts of the criminal justice system. The code states that all victims of crime should be able to make a victim personal statement, which they can use to explain how the crime has affected them.¹¹

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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 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.

The provision of special measures to prevent witnesses being intimidated and the use of personal statements to make courts aware of the psychological impact of being victimised are routine parts of prosecutions within specialist units. More rape allegations result in prosecutions in the force in comparison to other similar forces and this reflects positively on the effort the force undertakes, with partner organisations, to support traumatised victims and the quality of investigations it undertakes. However, not all victims in Lincolnshire are offered this opportunity of making a personal statement at the appropriate time. The force needs to make sure this is explained and offered consistently, and in good time.

Working with partners

The force is generally good at identifying and dealing with vulnerability and safeguarding is regarded as everyone's responsibility. Lincolnshire Police has an established central referral unit (CRU) which is operating effectively and where referral arrangements are well understood. The number of referrals has increased significantly since its start in early 2014 and staff are encouraged to make referrals. The force has an effective triage process with vulnerable children being dealt with as a priority.

The CRU provides a mechanism to assess dynamically the needs of victims. This means immediate strategy and planning discussions and the provision of support and intervention takes place where necessary. The force is considering developing this approach with other partner organisations for a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH).¹² As most other forces move towards a MASH it is important this approach is considered with partners, such as children and adult services and health, as it has the potential to improve decision-making, make better interventions and ultimately make vulnerable people safer in Lincolnshire. The force is becoming increasingly effective at identifying potential harm to children or vulnerable adults through the 'stop abuse' referral reporting system. Future arrangements will need to meet increasing need and risk given the significant increase in the reporting of individuals potentially exposed to harm, including the most vulnerable children.

HMIC found a range of positive work with partners, which sits outside the CRU. The force can refer vulnerable victims to independent domestic abuse and sexual assault advisers, and works closely with the voluntary sector to share information and to support and safeguard vulnerable victims. The force sends police community support officers into schools to help educate young people about the risks of sexual exploitation and to spot those who might be at risk. It also has productive partnerships with voluntary organisations.

¹² A multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) brings together into a single location key safeguarding agencies to better identify risks to children (and in some areas, vulnerable adults), and improve decision-making, interventions, and outcomes. The MASH enables the multi-agency team to share all appropriate information in a secure environment, and ensure that the most appropriate response is provided to effectively safeguard and protect the individual.

Lincolnshire holds multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)¹³ with professionals from other bodies in order to safeguard those considered to be at the highest risk of harm. As part of our inspection, HMIC observed a conference and found good participation by those present with clear evidence that the MARAC is effectively safeguarding victims and children through information-sharing and joint action-planning.

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 Lincolnshire Police 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.

Missing and absent children

The force does not yet understand fully the scale and scope of the problem of missing and absent children in the county, and in particular those who are frequently missing from home.

A recently-established missing persons co-ordinator role is co-located with the safe team. This means that professionals in this team, including those from partner organisations, keep children safe and provide an accelerated process should there be an increased level of risk to ensure that necessary steps can be taken to locate and protect children. The co-ordinator ensures that representatives from Barnardo's speak to children upon their return to gain a better understanding of the reason for their absence and to assess their risk of child sexual exploitation.¹⁴ However, it is not clear how this information is then used to develop a planned, co-ordinated and prioritised immediate response (sometimes called a trigger plan) which is especially relevant for the most persistent missing children. Outside the safe team, we found a poor understanding of the co-ordinator role among frontline staff.

¹³ MARACs (multi-agency risk assessment conferences) – local meetings where information about high-risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies.

¹⁴ Return interviews for children and young people who go missing from home or care are the responsibility of the local authority. Third parties such as Barnardo's will be commissioned to carry them out.

For example, they are unaware of a top ten frequent missing list, produced by the co-ordinator, which could be used by local policing teams to work with local partners and the child or young person.

The force's response to missing and absent children is also sometimes not well-supervised. Although the control room has effective systems in place to assess initial risk, local supervisors do not always take the initiative and oversee incidents, then direct resources and actions quickly. Additionally, reviews of police activity are not being conducted in a timely manner by inspectors. Common to many other forces, Lincolnshire Police uses a missing persons' database to record missing cases. A small number of cases which we reviewed show that there is considerable delay in recording information onto this system or it is not recorded at all and only the incident log is used.

This affects adversely a number of aspects of the investigation, including:

- automatic notifications are not completed;
- subsequent missing episodes do not benefit from access to all the available information; and
- police and partners working together to reduce the number of missing episodes also have more limited information.

A working group, chaired by a senior officer, is trying to resolve how the force responds to missing and absent persons. The force needs to accelerate this work as the force cannot otherwise be confident that the necessary review and safeguarding of missing people, including children, is taking place.

Preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation

The force has made a fairly good start in ensuring it is well prepared 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 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 conducts 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 is working to understand the nature and scale of child sexual exploitation within the county. There is considerable scope for more analysis to be completed and the force, partners and the voluntary sector show a strong commitment to build on existing knowledge and effective practice. The safe team is an established co-located multi-agency team consisting of child sexual exploitation professionals. This is a positive development and provides a skilled investigation and safeguarding response to identified cases of child sexual exploitation. The investment by partners to this unit is very encouraging. It enables quick information-sharing, joint

assessment of risk, joint strategy discussions and meetings, and rapid agreement of actions to safeguard the victim.

All organisations within the team use a common child sexual exploitation risk assessment tool which ensures consistency. There are recorded weekly and monthly meetings to co-ordinate action and allocate cases. The top ten children at risk of child sexual exploitation are identified through this and partners work together to address risks.

In addition to the safe team the force has access to additional specialist support. This is through three child advocates (specialist workers who support children and help them access services). One is located in the sexual assault referral centre. Specialist support is also available through a third sector provider 'link to change'.

Frontline staff have a limited understanding, including poor awareness of the warning signs to identify children at risk of child sexual exploitation. A national e-learning training package has been circulated but less than one-third of officers have completed it. This training is designed to provide staff with the information they need to make informed decisions in recognising and dealing with vulnerable people and to support them in accessing specialist advice if needed. The training package is now designated as a high-priority and is a mandatory requirement.

A reference document produced by the force on child sexual exploitation has not yet been circulated. However, there are plans to improve knowledge of and give increased recognition to child sexual exploitation and in particular the safe team and the capability offered. Currently, except for those frequently missing children with whom staff regularly deal, within the force there is little reference at daily meetings and briefings to frontline staff about those children at risk of child sexual exploitation.

The force needs to build on its safe team approach to ensure that child sexual exploitation risk is identified at an early stage. It should also make sure that continuing investigation and protection of the young people involved is carried out by staff with the right level of expertise, working in partnership with the right agencies.

Domestic abuse

Lincolnshire Police's response to victims of domestic abuse is good. It is clear and well-understood by staff across the force. Supervision is focused and appropriately intrusive. Staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in relation to supporting victims and investigating incidents of domestic abuse. Lincolnshire had a positive domestic abuse report from the HMIC domestic abuse inspection in 2014 and has made progress on the service it provides to victims. It has addressed nine out of its ten recommendations with plans in place for the final one. Importantly, the force has reviewed the allocation of domestic abuse investigations and although it has decided not to create a dedicated investigation team it is investing in more detective sergeants posts. The force also recognises that some investigations are still

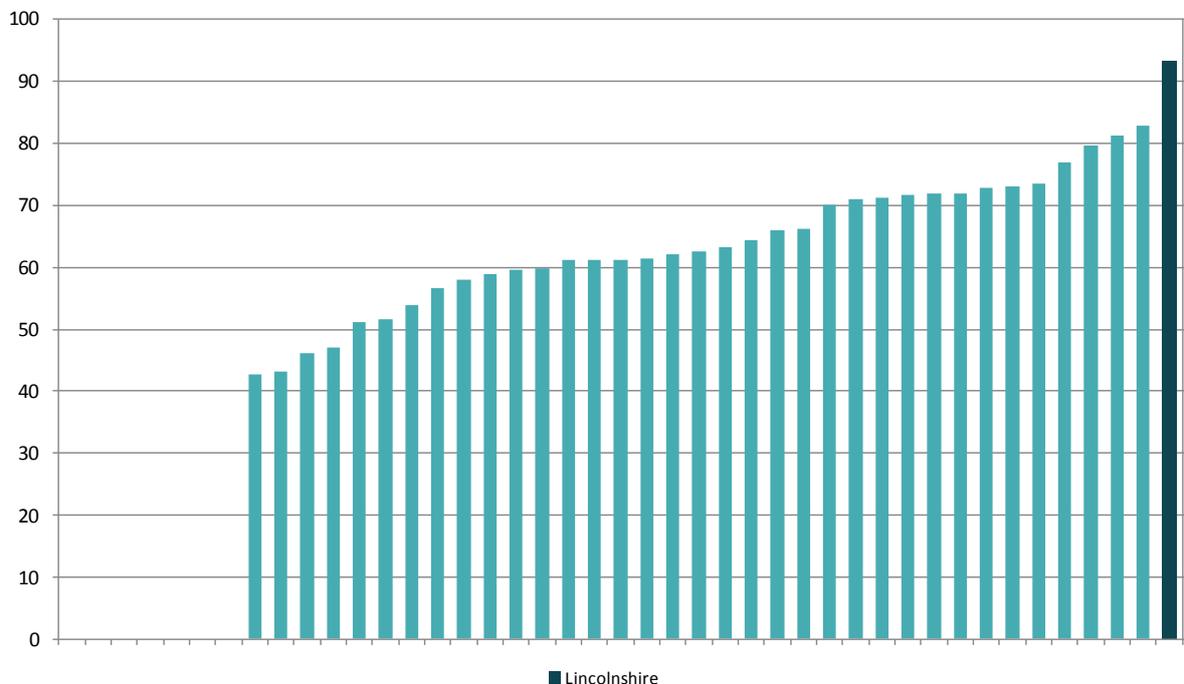
being allocated on the basis of crime type and complexity and not on risk, which means that skilled and experienced resources are still not aligned fully with risk. Lincolnshire is auditing the scale and scope of this area of demand before a decision is made.

HMIC found a robust system of recording domestic abuse offences in Lincolnshire. In addition, the force has an established process to ensure its staff complete all risk assessments following an initial response. An incident log cannot be closed without a risk assessment being completed and recorded on the system. Also, supervisors are expected to review and endorse the assessment and ensure that staff grade risk and undertake safeguarding action appropriately.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 15 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 7 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 Lincolnshire made 93 arrests. This is a high rate and Lincolnshire Police shares learning across the force from previous domestic abuse-related homicide reviews.

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

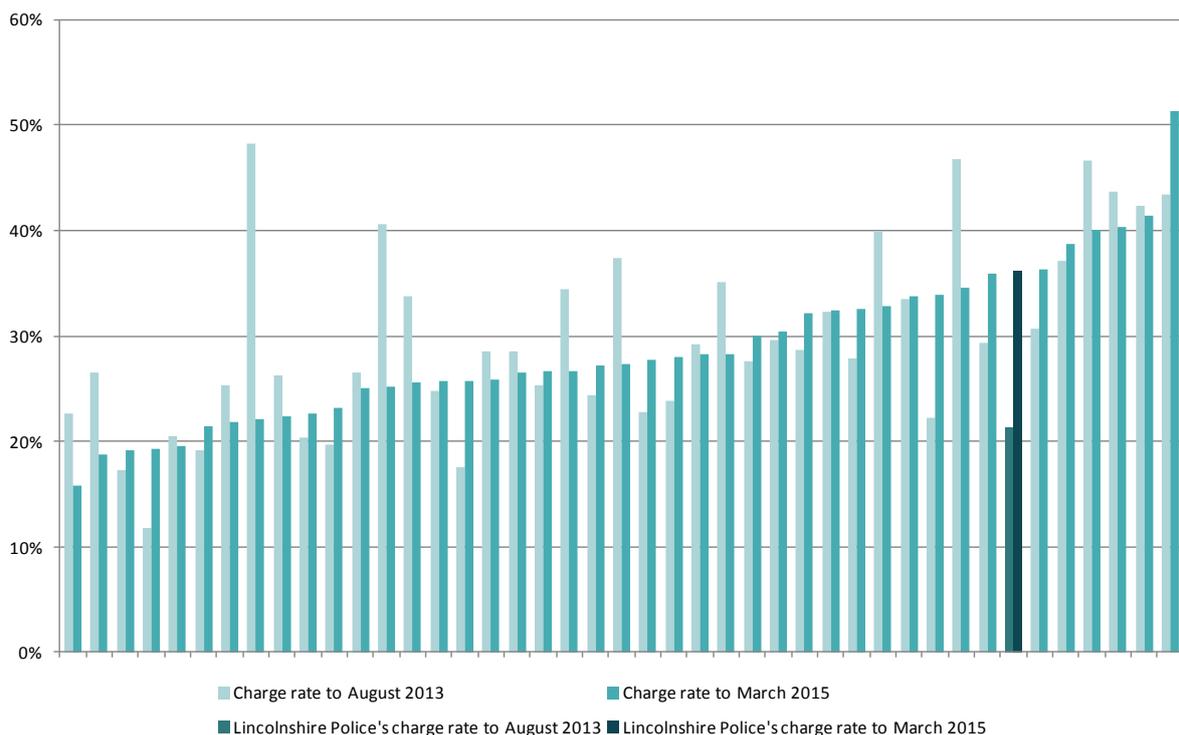
The force considers safeguarding from the point of initial reporting and throughout the investigation. The person answering the 999 call generally offers immediate and practical safeguarding advice. Frontline staff are knowledgeable about ways to keep

people safe although we saw less understanding of the support services available. All staff are very familiar with the 'stop abuse' referral method and use this mechanism extensively to raise concerns about vulnerability.

HMIC reviewed 13 domestic abuse files as well as a number of cases during the inspection field work phase and found a good standard of investigation which centred on the victim. Vulnerability and safeguarding issues are generally dealt with well, with high-risk domestic abuse victims investigated by dedicated staff. Domestic abuse officers are carrying out and recording safety plans with an extensive use of safeguarding options.

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 21 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

This a noticeable increase in the charge rate and HMIC found that frontline staff and supervisors take positive action against domestic abuse perpetrators and are aware of the immediate options available to keep the victim safe and where to obtain specialist advice. Longer-term safeguarding issues and support are managed through the domestic abuse officers, who have access to independent domestic

violence advisers. HMIC identified strong evidence of joint safeguarding activity to support vulnerable victims of domestic abuse, even when the victim was reluctant to engage with staff. A survey is available for victims of domestic abuse to complete voluntarily. This work to find out the views of victims is having a positive effect on how and what services to victims are provided.

HMIC also examined the force's use of new legal powers to protect victims. Domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) 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 June 2014; it made 27 applications to magistrates' courts for their use, of which 25 were granted. Six 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 24 percent compared with the England and Wales rate of 17 percent.¹⁵

Lincolnshire Police feels that it can increase the use of DVPNs¹⁶ and DVPOs to safeguard victims of domestic abuse. The force is raising awareness and confidence among its staff of the procedures to secure these measures.

¹⁵ The England and Wales figure is based on data provided by 35 forces.

¹⁶ DVPNs (domestic violence prevention notices) may be issued by an authorised police officer to prevent a suspected perpetrator from returning to a victim's home and/or contacting the victim. Following the issue of the DVPN the police must apply to the magistrates for a domestic violence prevention order (DVPO). The DVPO will be granted for a period of up to 28 days.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Lincolnshire Police generally provides a good service in identifying vulnerable people and responds well to them. However, there are several areas where improvement is needed.

The force generally investigates well crime committed against the most vulnerable victims. However, HMIC is concerned that the force does not always involve the right number of specialists and right level of specialist expertise in complex cases involving domestic abuse and serious sexual offences. The force also needs to improve its supervision and prioritisation of workloads.

Officers attending domestic abuse incidents have a good knowledge of how to assess risk and keep victims safe. HMIC found a robust system of recording domestic abuse offences in Lincolnshire.

The force does not have a co-ordinated or consistently well-supervised process for responding to reports that children are missing or absent. Although it has made a start in improving its response to how it investigates and safeguards missing and absent children, it still needs to do more.

Work between professionals, including those from partner organisations, in the safe team and the central referral unit helps keep children safe, providing effective responses to cases involving increased levels of risk. The force has made a fairly good start in ensuring it is well-prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation but it must now build on this to ensure that this ambition translates into consistent operational practice.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its investigation of cases involving vulnerable victims, specifically in relation to cases involving victims of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences, to ensure appropriately-skilled and experienced staff conduct the investigation and there is effective supervision and prioritisation of workloads.
- 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.
- The force should improve its response to missing children by developing its understanding of the scale and nature of the issue. In persistent cases the force should ensure it uses information from previous missing episodes to develop a co-ordinated and prioritised response. The force should also ensure that frontline staff and supervisors understand how to identify the risk factors associated with missing children and the potential links to child sexual exploitation, understand their roles and responsibilities for investigating and safeguarding, and use effectively systems designed to support the management of cases.
- The force should improve its response to children at risk of sexual exploitation by ensuring it develops its understanding of the scale and nature of the issue, and that its frontline staff have an appropriate level of knowledge of the factors to identify cases and understand how to respond.