

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of North Yorkshire Police



December 2015

© HMIC 2015

ISBN: 978-1-911194-40-8

www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic

Contents

Vulnerability in numbers	3
Introduction	5
How effective is the force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?.....	7
Summary	7
How well does the force identify those who are vulnerable and assess their level of risk and need?.....	9
How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?.....	12
How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners to keep victims safe?	14
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?	16
Summary of findings	21

Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

North Yorkshire
Police

280

England and Wales

350

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

North Yorkshire
Police

13.0

England and Wales

15.8



Crime

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

North Yorkshire
Police

43.0

England and Wales

61.6

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

North Yorkshire
Police

+0.5%

England and Wales

+2.2%

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

North Yorkshire
Police

12.5%

England and Wales

10.7%

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

North Yorkshire
Police

10.6%

England and Wales

10.0%

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

North Yorkshire
Police

+24.6%

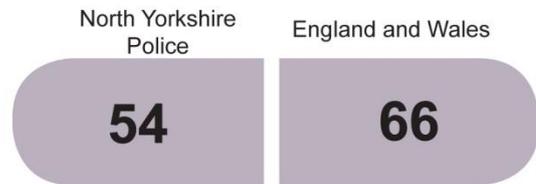
England and Wales

+20.8%



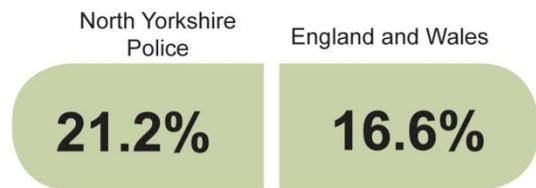
Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

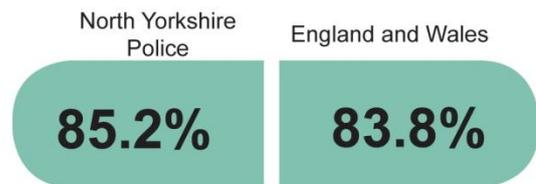


Domestic abuse charge rate as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015



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 North Yorkshire Police.

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

Summary



Requires improvement

North Yorkshire Police generally provides a good service in identifying vulnerable people and responds well to them, so the public can be confident that many victims are well supported. There is a clear focus on protecting those who are most vulnerable and supporting victims. The force has worked hard to improve its understanding of the scale and nature of crimes against those who are most vulnerable. There are action plans to continue to develop and improve the services it provides. However, there are several areas where improvement is needed to ensure vulnerable people are consistently protected. 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 resource to offer a high quality service to the public in this area. North Yorkshire Police works well in identifying those who may be vulnerable at the earliest opportunity and assessing the risk they face. In order to provide the most appropriate response, the chief constable has committed additional resources to improve services for protecting vulnerable people.

The force restructured how it provides policing earlier this year and has established specialist investigators for crimes involving vulnerable victims. It has set up investigation hubs to investigate the majority of offences including some domestic abuse incidents; serious crime teams, which undertake investigations into the most serious and complex crimes such as child sex offences and high-risk domestic abuse cases; and a major crime team for the investigation of murder and other threat to life crimes. The investigation hubs have a mix of detectives, response officers and police staff carrying out the investigations. HMIC found that there can be inconsistencies in understanding who deals with victims of domestic abuse. Specialist investigators in the serious crime team deal with all high-risk cases, however those assessed as lower-risk may receive a service from a detective, civilian investigator or uniformed officer within the investigation hub, dependent on workload.

The force has made good progress in developing joint working arrangements with local partner organisations, to ensure that vulnerable victims get the best service possible. The force has worked well in partnership with some other organisations to

develop specific projects to safeguard further and provide services for children and young people. There is still some room for improvement in ensuring that all relevant organisations are contributing to this joint work.

There are clear structures and processes in place to respond to reports of missing and absent children. The force is working well with other agencies to develop a better understanding of the extent of child sexual exploitation in North Yorkshire and is developing a joint approach to providing joined-up services to children and young people who may be at risk. This inspection only considered how well prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation.

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

HMIC found that North Yorkshire Police has a clear focus on protecting those who are most vulnerable and on supporting victims. This is a priority within the police and crime commissioner's (PCC's) police and crime plan for North Yorkshire 2013-2017. The force has undertaken detailed analysis to better understand the major areas of vulnerability, and the scale and nature of crimes against vulnerable victims across North Yorkshire.

The chief constable and the PCC have committed additional funding and resources to providing enhanced services to vulnerable victims. The force has increased the staffing levels in its safeguarding unit and provided extra staff to support victims of domestic abuse.

Identifying those who are vulnerable

When a 999 call is received in the force control room staff have access to information from all police IT systems to enable them to make an assessment of risk and vulnerability. This includes any previous police involvement with both the individuals involved and the incident location. There are systems in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims who contact the police. The force identifies those who are vulnerable by highlighting or 'flagging'¹ individuals who have previously been identified as vulnerable, such as at those at risk of child sexual exploitation or domestic abuse.

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.

North Yorkshire 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

¹ Flags appear on the computer screen when information is keyed in by the operator.

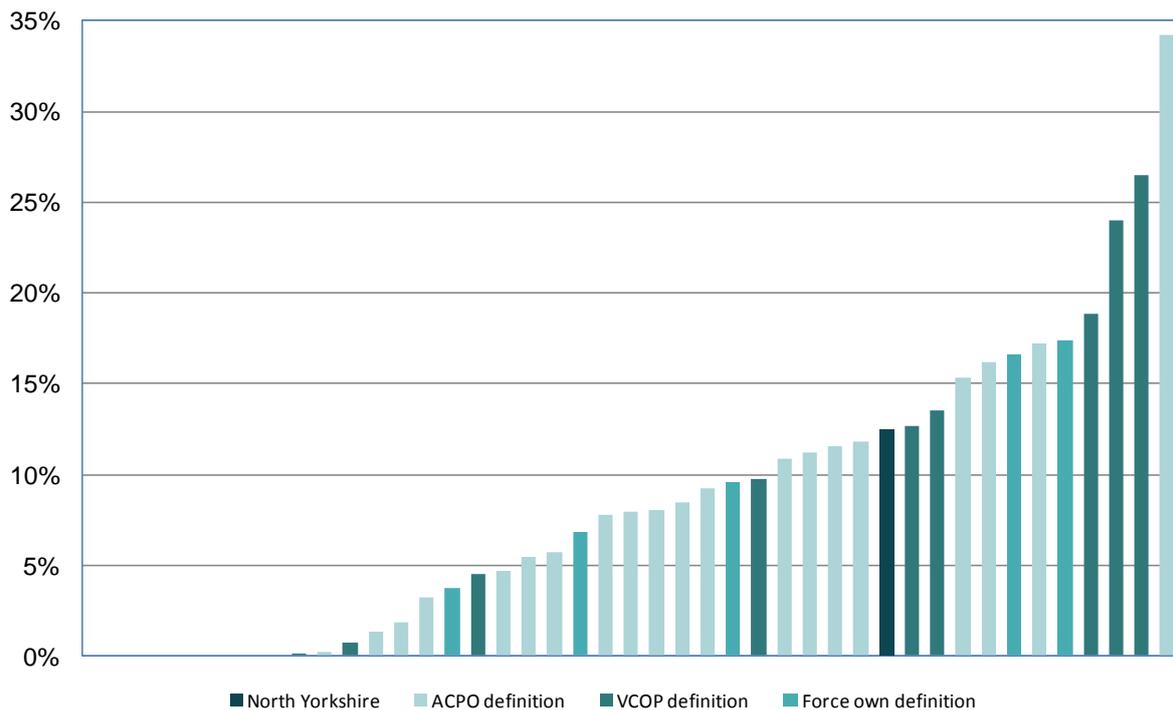
² *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, 2013. Available from www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254459/code-of-practice-victims-of-crime.pdf

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

- 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, 12.5 percent of all recorded crimes in North Yorkshire 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 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

Assessing levels of risk and need

North Yorkshire Police recognises that its response to calls needs to be determined by the needs of the victim rather than the type of crime. It has introduced a structured assessment to be used by call-takers in the control room based on the

level of threat, harm and risk faced by the victim; known as THRIVE.⁴ The technique provides the staff receiving calls for police attendance with a way of making a fully-rounded decision about the relative risk to the individual victim, the level of threat, and the opportunities to investigate a crime. This enables the police response to be more proportionate to the risk and threat to the victim. The risk assessment process along with access to previous calls and history supports the call-taker in determining the most appropriate police response to each call.

The force is working jointly with mental health services, providing street triage teams to identify and provide the most appropriate service to those suffering from mental health concerns. This is a positive approach to ensuring vulnerable people with mental health concerns receive a timely assessment and support according to their needs.

In addition, the force is soon to have mental health professionals working within the force control room to provide information and guidance to support the THRIVE risk assessment and make sure the most appropriate resource is sent to incidents.

The routine daily management meetings enable senior officers to review incidents involving vulnerable people to ensure that safeguarding has been completed with the right resources dealing with victims. The force safeguarding unit contributes to assessing and supporting vulnerability through the use of domestic abuse officers and referrals to partner agencies for safeguarding action.

HMIC found staff are aware of what makes people vulnerable and see it as their priority to keep those people safe. Staff are able to articulate the risk factors both personal and the circumstances which would make someone vulnerable and used professional judgment to assist with assessing levels of vulnerability.

We found inconsistencies in the degree to which shift briefings for response officers focused on vulnerable victims, but found a consistently strong focus on crime trends and offenders who needed to be located and arrested for various offences. Briefings considered some elements of vulnerability, such as updating officers with details of people who were missing from home, but this was not comprehensive in all cases.

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

HMIC found that in North Yorkshire the requirements of some vulnerable groups are better understood than others.

The force also has an understanding of and a consistent approach to meeting the needs of missing and absent children. There is room for improvement in understanding the reasons why some children go missing from home which would

⁴ The THRIVE approach considers, threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement.

enable the force to assess better any risks they may be facing such as sexual exploitation. The force is in the process of establishing a Vulnerability Assessment Team (VAT) for this purpose.

The force is still developing its understanding of child sexual exploitation alongside partner agencies. The force has used police and partner data to assess the scale of child sexual exploitation in North Yorkshire and better identify those who may be at risk.

The force in the main understands the needs of vulnerable people who have been victims of domestic abuse, and responds well to these needs. There is a positive response to calls for service and there are specialist domestic abuse officers. This work is co-ordinated by the safeguarding unit. The force could improve the investigation of domestic abuse by capturing early evidence at scenes and identifying those who are entitled to receive services under the code of practice for victims of crime.

The force restructured how it provides policing earlier this year and has established a tiered approach to criminal investigation work. The first tier is the investigation hub which investigates the majority of crimes, including some domestic abuse cases. The hub has a mix of detectives, response officers and police staff carrying out the investigations. The second tier has seen the merger of the protecting vulnerable people team and the criminal investigations department to form serious crime teams. Officers based within these teams are specialist detectives responsible for investigation of the most serious and complex forms of crime, including child sexual offences and crimes against those in society deemed vulnerable to criminality. The third tier is the major crime team for the investigation of murder and other threat to life crimes.

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

North Yorkshire Police responds well to vulnerable victims. The force changed the way it provides policing in April this year to align resources in a better way to meet demand. It has set up investigation hubs and serious crime teams which undertake all crime and safeguarding investigations.

The change has ensured both response officers and safer neighbourhood officers have greater capacity to respond to calls for service and support vulnerable victims from an early stage. The force demand-management policy sets out the various

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.

graded responses for attending calls for service. The THRIVE risk assessment, within the control room, determines the grade of response and priority is given to incidents involving people who have been assessed as vulnerable.

Response officers

HMIC found that officers who respond to calls for service are knowledgeable and aware of what makes someone vulnerable. Some training has been provided in relation to vulnerability and child sexual exploitation; however this is not consistent across the whole of the workforce as some staff are yet to be trained.

Officers attending incidents complete formal risk assessments for identified areas of vulnerability. The domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence (DASH)⁶ risk assessment is used to assess and record the levels of risk with victims of domestic abuse. For other areas where vulnerability is a factor, a bespoke vulnerability risk assessment is undertaken. Once officers have completed the assessments they are sent to the force safeguarding unit where they are quality assured and a further assessment is completed to ensure safeguarding measures are taken to protect the victim.

HMIC found that there is limited provision to secure evidence at the scene of domestic incidents. The force does not routinely provide attending officers with either body-worn video or stills cameras so is unable capture photographic evidence of the scene, the suspect and/or the victim or record injuries. Instead, victims of domestic abuse are required to attend crime scene clinics to have their injuries photographed and recorded. This is not the best quality of service possible for victims. In addition, good practice nationally shows that video footage and photographs captured at the initial attendance present very compelling evidence and may often result in an early guilty plea and a more positive outcome for the victim.

Supervision of the response to vulnerable victims

Supervisors play an active role at each stage of the police response to ensure that vulnerable victims' needs are addressed. The control room supervisors review calls and check that vulnerability has been appropriately assessed and the right police response initiated. The highest risk calls are also overseen by the force incident manager in the control room who is a police inspector.

In the case of domestic abuse incidents, response officers' supervisors check the quality of the initial investigation and the assessment of risk. Missing and absent children cases are managed by supervisors who direct the activity to find those who are missing.

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

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

HMIC judges that this is an area in which North Yorkshire Police requires improvement.

The new structure for policing in North Yorkshire was designed to match demand better and to protect vulnerable people. It was introduced in April and is due to be reviewed by the force in September 2015. The force is still developing how it works with partner agencies to safeguard those at risk. Its partnership working needs to improve to continue to develop the quality and consistency of service provided to the public.

Investigation of crimes involving vulnerable people

HMIC reviewed 40 investigations,⁸ of which 17 were identified as involving a vulnerable person. We found staff with the right skills had been assigned to investigate the offences involving a vulnerable victim. However, staff had not identified correctly the vulnerability of the victim in all cases.

Therefore, although the majority of investigations were of a good quality and were supervised well, in the cases where vulnerability was incorrectly assessed, the victim's needs may not have been met fully.

HMIC found that the newly-established investigation hubs contain a good mix of skills from accredited detectives, police officers and civilian investigators. There is a commitment and drive from staff to support their communities and victims. However, the investigation hubs are carrying significant workloads and a high number of vacancies is adding to the problem. We found that supervisors are allocating investigations according to an officer's workload rather than their skills and experience for the investigation. This means that there are inconsistencies in who deals with victims of domestic abuse. For example, all high-risk domestic abuse victims are dealt with by specialist investigators within the serious crime team, but a victim assessed as either medium or standard-risk may receive service from a detective, a uniformed police officer or a civilian investigator. There is therefore a risk that the force is not providing a consistently good service to vulnerable victims.

⁷ The question within the PEEL inspection methodology asks "How well does the subsequent police action and work with partners keep people 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.

HMIC acknowledges that the changes made this year to the policing model are designed in due course to ensure staff have the requisite training and experience for investigations, but there remains a risk in the meantime that the force is not providing a consistently good service to vulnerable victims of crime.

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, which sets out the service that 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 personal statement⁹ which they can use to explain how the crime has affected them. However, HMIC found not all victims in North Yorkshire were offered this opportunity at the appropriate time. Following HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, we recommended that the force needed to improve its compliance with this code. The force should make sure officers understand their responsibilities under the code so that victims consistently receive the quality of service that they have a right to expect.

Victims should also be kept updated about the progress of their case. Generally, North Yorkshire Police does this well, including when there is a decision to take no further action against a suspect.

Working with partners

The force is now working well to develop better partnership arrangements. It works with a number of partner organisations in order to protect those who are vulnerable and support victims. Services such as health, social care, probation and the voluntary sector all play an important role alongside the police in ensuring vulnerable people are protected and offenders brought to justice.

The force recognises the importance of sharing information between partners to ensure that all relevant information can be used to assess jointly and plan the most appropriate service, particularly when safeguarding vulnerable victims and children. The force has a safeguarding unit located within one of the local council buildings and there is some good work with local authorities.

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.

However, the force has made less progress in working closely with other partner organisations who could contribute to real-time assessment and share information within the safeguarding unit. The force would benefit from such partners supporting safeguarding within the unit.

We found some good examples of specific partnership projects to support those who are most vulnerable. For instance the 'No Wrong Door' project provides support for young people ensuring they can access services and are supported throughout the process. The force also has plans to improve the service to children at risk of child sexual exploitation through the introduction of multi-agency conferences for child sexual exploitation victims. This will be known as the 'vulnerable, exploited, missing or trafficked' (VEMT) process and is expected to ensure timely, effective information sharing and joint action planning between the police, health and social care services. This was due to be implemented in the autumn of 2015 and is a promising new initiative.

North Yorkshire Police already runs multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) with professionals from other bodies in order to safeguard those considered to be at the highest risk of harm. As part of the inspection, HMIC observed a conference taking place and found it to be an effective way of sharing information and joining-up the response from all those involved to safeguard victims and children. The North Yorkshire MARAC process not only supports high-risk cases of domestic abuse, as is the norm but also has the capacity to deal with medium and, at times, standard-risk cases.

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 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

North Yorkshire Police provides a good response to missing and absent children,¹⁰ with a clear and well-structured process for officers to follow. The force has agreed a protocol for working jointly with partners to investigate and safeguard children and young people who are missing or absent.

HMIC found that when children are reported as missing, there are effective systems in place to assess the level of risk, and make sure that the right resources are allocated to take action. A police inspector manages all incidents of missing children, directing the actions and resources used to find the child. There is a consistent reporting process which is reviewed and checked by the force missing persons' co-ordinator who also works with local authority partners to help keep children safe. The processes are well understood by senior leaders and staff. Missing from home incidents are reviewed daily by senior officers within the district and by each inspector at shift change over.

During the inspection HMIC reviewed a sample of six cases of missing children. The investigations were handled well, risk was assessed correctly and a timely and proportionate response provided. Good links had been made with partner agencies to work together to safeguard missing and absent children. We also found evidence of effective supervision in all cases.

Officers routinely speak to the children when they return to make sure they are safe and well. However, once a child has been returned home, the force needs to do more to maintain joint work with partners so that it can reassure itself that further contact with missing and absent children is being made by other agencies. This continuing contact would enable the force to gain a better understanding of the reason for them going missing and to assess any risks such as child sexual exploitation.

Preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation

The force has made a 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 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 are covered in HMIC's rolling programme of child protection inspections.

¹⁰ 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 classified as missing the police are obliged to take steps to locate them, as the level of perceived risk is higher.

The force has demonstrated strong leadership in preparing its response to child sexual exploitation and is continuing to work with partner organisations to develop the collective understanding and scale of the issue. The force has undertaken detailed analysis to gain a better understanding of child sexual exploitation within North Yorkshire.

The force has raised awareness of child sexual exploitation both internally and externally through the use of media campaigns and internal communication. It is working with partner agencies to improve the gathering of community intelligence in relation to child sexual exploitation, for example from town centre outlets and taxi drivers.

The force has started to provide training for some staff, particularly frontline officers and staff, although this is not yet comprehensive. As a result we found inconsistencies across the force area, with some staff having greater levels of awareness than others of the issues.

There are existing safeguarding procedures in place to support children who are at risk of sexual exploitation. However the proposals to improve this through the VEMT process are expected to provide a much more robust response with earlier information-sharing and joined-up action planning with partners.

The force needs to continue to build on these approaches to ensure that child sexual exploitation risk is identified at an early stage and that continuing investigation and protection of the young people is carried out by staff with the right level of expertise, working in partnership with the right agencies.

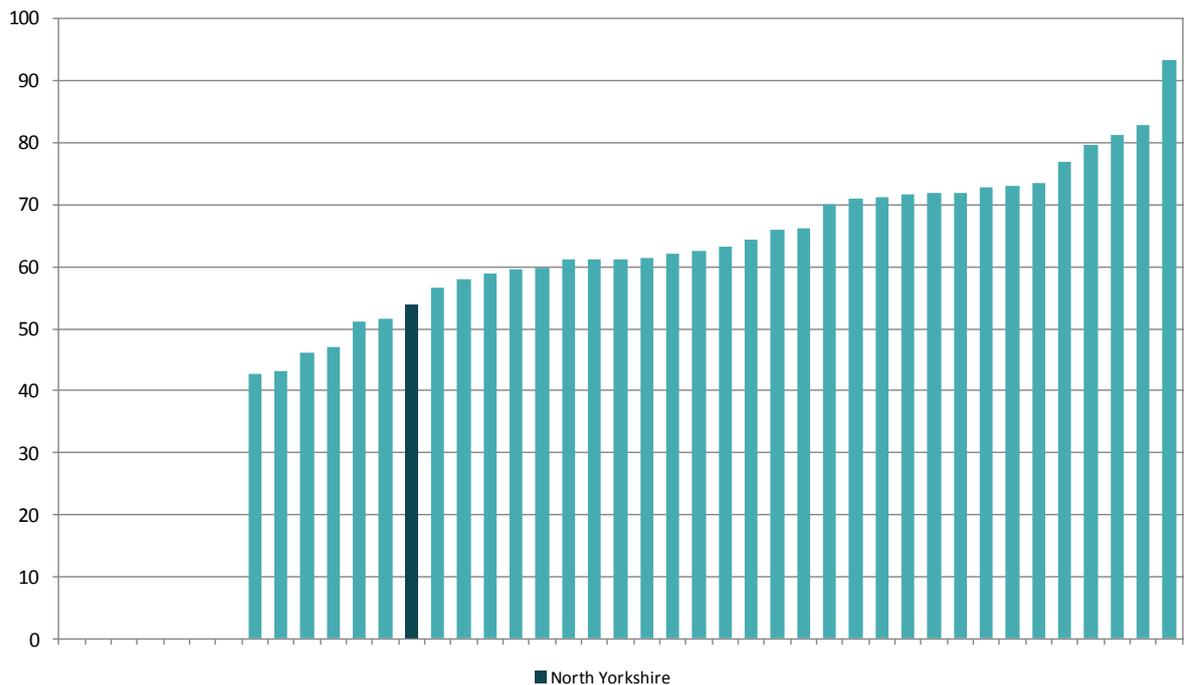
Domestic abuse

North Yorkshire Police generally provides a good response to victims of domestic abuse. The force and the PCC have committed additional resources to support the safeguarding of victims. The safeguarding unit assesses all domestic abuse incidents and risk assessments in a timely and prioritised way. It uses specialist staff to complete safeguarding plans and protect victims immediately and then supports longer-term safeguarding through referrals to independent domestic abuse support workers. It liaises with police community support officers who conduct safeguarding and reassurance visits to victims. Specialist officers also provide safeguarding advice and support to the wider organisation. However, following the force restructure earlier this year when it established specialist investigators for crimes involving vulnerable victims, HMIC found that there can be inconsistencies in understanding who deals with victims of domestic abuse. All high-risk cases are dealt with by specialist investigators however those assessed as lower risk may receive a service from a detective, civilian investigator or uniformed officer within the investigation hub, dependent on workload. There is a risk that the force is not providing a consistently good service to vulnerable victims.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 25 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 11 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 North Yorkshire Police made 54 arrests.

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

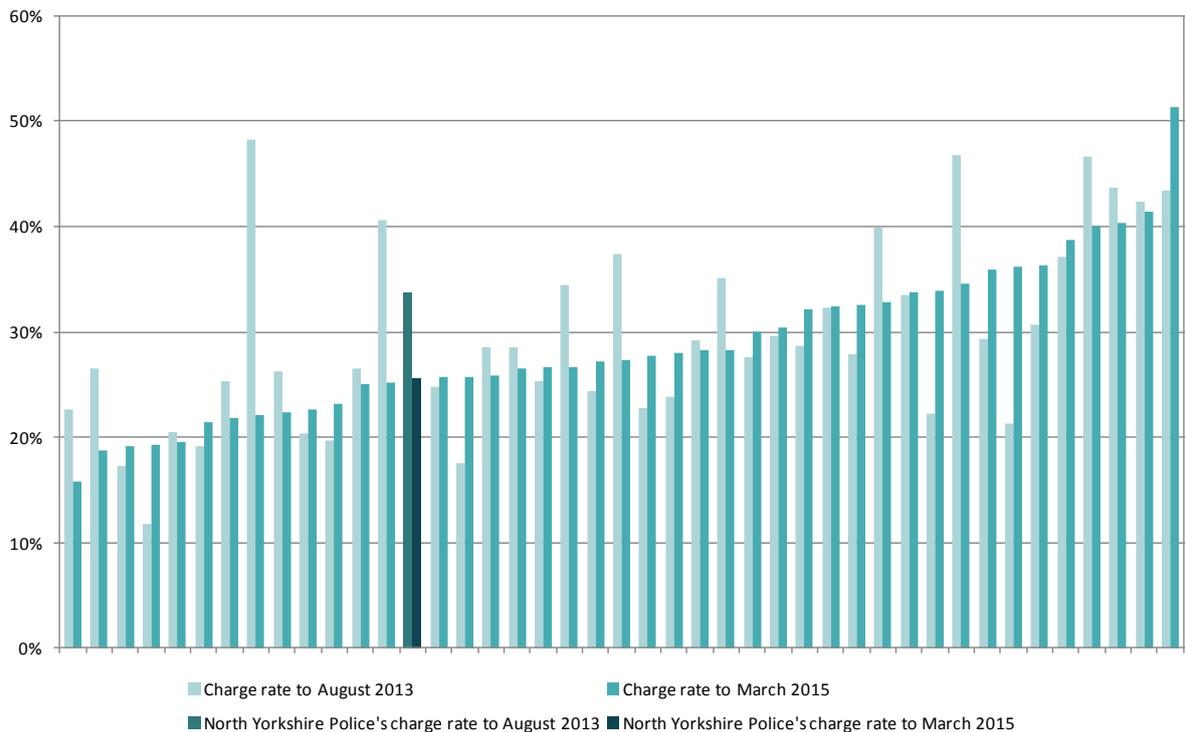


Source: HMIC data return

North Yorkshire Police had a positive domestic abuse report from HMIC in 2014. The force has addressed four of the report's five recommendations, and is working towards completing the remaining one.

The force's charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 26 percent, compared with 27 percent for England and Wales. This is a decrease since the last HMIC domestic abuse inspection when the force rate was 34 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 (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 March 2014; it made 17 applications to magistrates' courts for their use, of which 16 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.¹¹

¹¹ The England and Wales figure is based on data provided by 35 forces.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

North Yorkshire Police generally provides a good service in identifying vulnerable people and responds well to support and protect them. The force has worked hard to improve its understanding of the scale and nature of crimes against those who are most vulnerable. It has plans in place to continue to develop and improve the services it provides. However, there are several areas where improvement is needed to ensure vulnerable people are consistently protected.

There has been good progress in consistently identifying those who may be vulnerable at the earliest opportunity and assessing the risk they face in order to provide the most appropriate response. The new policing model introduced earlier this year has established specialist investigators for crimes involving vulnerable victims who face the highest risk. However HMIC found there are still inconsistencies in the way the force investigates crimes against vulnerable people with a range of differently skilled and qualified investigators being used dependent on workloads.

North Yorkshire Police works well in response to reports of missing and absent children. It has made a good start in working with other local organisations to develop a better understanding of the extent of child sexual exploitation in North Yorkshire.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its initial investigation of cases involving victims of domestic abuse by ensuring responding officers have access to photographic and/or video-recording equipment to show evidence of injuries and crime scenes.
- The force should improve its compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime specifically in relation to victim personal statements.
- The force should improve its investigation of cases involving vulnerable victims by ensuring officers and staff understand how to identify vulnerability and cases are allocated to officers with the appropriate professional skills and expertise to carry out such investigations.