

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of South Wales Police



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Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

South Wales Police England and Wales

314

350

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

South Wales Police England and Wales

22.1

15.8



Crime

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

South Wales Police England and Wales

68.7

61.6

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

South Wales Police England and Wales

+8.8%

+2.2%

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

South Wales Police England and Wales

5.4%

10.7%

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

South Wales Police England and Wales

10.5%

10.0%

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

South Wales Police England and Wales

+29.2%

+20.8%



Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

South Wales Police England and Wales



Charge rate

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

South Wales Police England and Wales



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

South Wales Police England and Wales



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

South Wales 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 South Wales Police.

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

Summary



Requires improvement

South Wales Police identifies and supports vulnerable victims effectively. Domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation are priorities for the force, which has provided frontline staff with comprehensive training to support this. Staff are clear that the needs of the victim are paramount and demonstrate this in their daily activity. The force generally provides vulnerable victims with a good service when investigating offences. However, we found several areas where improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent and that vulnerable people, particularly children who go missing, are kept safe. Given the risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall the force requires improvement.

The force has a good understanding of local crime trends and patterns of offending. It is developing a vulnerability tool kit to map the locations of victims and perpetrators and to identify children who may become victims of child sexual exploitation.

The force has well-developed partnerships, which help to focus on providing services that meet the needs of vulnerable victims. The multi-agency safeguarding hub has effective information-sharing agreements and is regarded by the force as the model for future development in dealing with vulnerable people.

High-risk victims of domestic abuse receive a high level of service and care from South Wales Police, but less so for standard and medium risk victims. Frontline staff are well-prepared to deal with domestic abuse when they attend an incident and conduct the initial investigation.

The force has a limited understanding of the nature and scale of missing persons. It does not fully understand the extent of the threat of street grooming of vulnerable young people in the care system. The force carries out immediate safe and well checks inconsistently on missing people who have returned home. This could expose children to even more risk of grooming for child sexual abuse.

Tackling child sexual exploitation is clearly a force priority, shared by the chief constable and the police and crime commissioner. One area in the force has recently created a child sexual exploitation team, with a view to understanding better those children at risk, gathering intelligence and targeting the highest-risk offenders and suspects.

This inspection only considered how well prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. The force was also subject to an inspection of its child protection services. The more detailed findings from that inspection were published in July 2015,¹ and should be read in conjunction with this inspection report.

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

Putting victims at the heart of the force's activity is central to how South Wales Police works. Supporting victims is a main part of the police and crime commissioner's overall plan and is a thread through all the priority areas of the force's work. The force control strategy² (dated 1 June 2015) highlights vulnerability as a priority. From this a number of baseline problem profiles³ have been established, primarily focusing on child sexual exploitation. The workforce is engaged with and understands the principle of putting the needs of the victim first. The concept of vulnerability is ingrained in the culture of the force. Officers and staff demonstrate a caring attitude towards victims of crime.

Identifying those who are vulnerable

South Wales Police is good at identifying repeat and vulnerable victims when they first contact the police.

Forces define vulnerability in different ways. The majority of forces use either the definition from the government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime⁴ or that referred to in ACPO guidance.⁵ Nine forces use their own definition or a combination of these definitions.

¹ *National Child Protection Inspections - South Wales Police*, HMIC, July 2015. Available in English and Welsh versions from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/south-wales-national-child-protection-inspection/

² A control strategy sets out and communicates the operational priorities for the force or command area and sets the long-term priorities for crime prevention, intelligence and enforcement.

³ 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.

⁴ *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

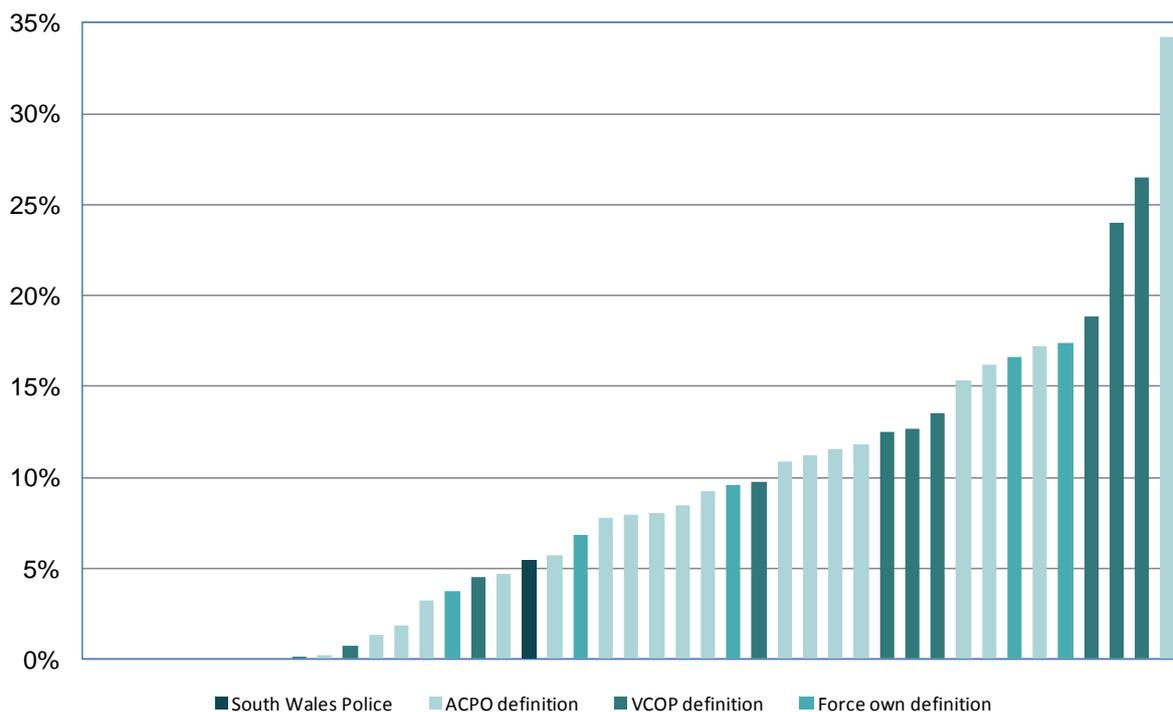
⁵ Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is now the National Police Chiefs' Council. *ACPO Guidance on Safeguarding and Investigating the Abuse of Vulnerable Adults*, NPIA, 2012. Available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/vulnerable-adults/

South Wales Police 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 12 months to 31 March 2015, 5.4 percent of all recorded crimes in South Wales 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

South Wales Police has a team of well-motivated and experienced staff in its public service centre (PSC). Contact and incident management is managed through an online command and control system, a proven system used by many police forces across England and Wales. Call-takers receive calls from the public from three possible routes: 999 calls, 101 (non-emergency) calls and direct dial force numbers.

HMIC found evidence that the call-takers understand the force's definition of vulnerability. The force has provided a programme of vulnerability training for all staff within the PSC. Calls are graded according to agreed parameters such as the type of incident being reported, for example domestic abuse. All calls are risk-assessed to establish the level of threat, risk and harm to the caller and this is used to determine the police response in line with their level of vulnerability. Call-handlers deal with the initial call, placing an incident onto the command and control system log; they may commit an incident to dispatch and then continue to work on an incident. The call maker may be kept on the line, or re-contacted if the need arises. The call-handler may also carry out other functions relating to the incident, for example contacting a Bronze Inspector or making contact with a partner agency. Dispatchers deploy officers to incidents via radio in the control room.

The command and control system does not automatically identify repeat victims. The call taker is required to check a number of the force's IT systems to identify repeat victims and locations. Although the control room call takers do not have direct access to the system to manage domestic violence and sex offenders, they do have 24/7 access to two local intelligence officers (LIOs) located within the control room. The LIOs will conduct any relevant and necessary checks on their behalf.

The command and control system does have a tag facility which enables vulnerability to be identified. This tag is applied to the address and the person making the call and can be added to alert staff of any public protection, domestic violence or child sexual exploitation concerns. A person with a history of vulnerability can easily be identified and their records of past calls and intelligence can be accessed quickly and easily. This information can be sent to a responding officer's handheld device (smartphone).

The force is introducing Control Works, a new command and control system, which will go live in November. This new system will enable the identification of vulnerable people/victims more quickly than the present system. It will create a Record of Contact (ROC) each time someone rings the Public Service Centre via 101 or 999. This will also provide sight of all previous call-handling history made by that person/victim. Unlike the current command and control system (NSPIS), Control Works will also interface with the Niche and PNC intelligence systems, enabling the force to identify vulnerable victims more quickly. Warning markers will appear prominently to operators on their front screens in the control works risk indicator box. In addition operators will have the ability to connect quickly to the Niche system which will enable quicker searches of IT systems.

Assessing levels of risk and need

The force allocates resources primarily according to agreed criteria, supplemented by a risk assessment process. Staff in the PSC use risk assessments effectively to assess the level of threat, risk and harm posed to victims. However, these assessments are not always recorded on the occurrence enquiry logs.

The force has clearly-defined and well-understood risk assessment processes. The domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH)⁶ risk assessment is used by frontline staff in domestic abuse cases to determine the level of risk of harm to a victim. The force uses a similar risk assessment tool for missing persons and these are graded as high, medium or low.

HMIC inspectors observed a number of calls received by the force during the inspection. In each case, call takers carried out a threat, risk and harm risk assessment during the call. Staff demonstrated how they assess the risk to and vulnerability of victims and the process to inform their grading of the police response to an incident. However, these risk assessments were frequently not documented within the command and control enquiry log record of the incident. As a result the rationale used to determine the grade of response was not available to all staff which ultimately may affect the service to the victim. All decisions not to attend as an urgent response or priority response were referred to the shift supervisors who would then record their decision on the incident log.

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

HMIC found that in South Wales the requirements of some vulnerable groups are better understood than others. The force has a good understanding of crime trends and patterns of offending, but a limited understanding of the nature and scale of missing persons. Its strategic assessment of missing people identifies that care homes and hospitals are the principal source of reports of missing people. South Wales acknowledges that it does not fully understand the extent to which the threat of 'street grooming' of vulnerable young people in the care system exists. It provides high-risk victims of domestic abuse with a good service and care, but provides a poorer service to standard and medium-risk victims.

The force is developing its approach to tackling child sexual exploitation. The police and crime commissioner, with the chief constable, has commissioned a review into every aspect of the police response and work with partners to tackle child sexual exploitation in South Wales.

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

To provide the most appropriate support to vulnerable victims, the force has invested more resource in the parts of its organisation which works to keep them safe. This includes developing a 'vulnerability toolkit' which uses data from the force's online crime and intelligence system to populate a mapping chart to show clear and established links to vulnerability. From this, the force allocates intelligence packages to the four basic command units (BCUs) to manage potential victims of child sexual exploitation. Force governance and oversight of the packages is through daily management meetings. The force is developing its toolkit, and is a flexible system which can overlay a number of sets of data from other sources including that of partners. However, the toolkit is not yet in place across the force. HMIC will be interested to see how successful and effective this proves to be.

The force also uses a domestic abuse management information tool (DAMIT) to assist in the management of domestic abuse. DAMIT records:

- how many times a victim has been linked to a domestic abuse incident within the last week, month, three months, and year;
- a child sexual exploitation team in one BCU;
- child sexual exploitation co-ordinators and advocates for each BCU;
- school liaison officers;
- missing persons co-ordinators; and
- domestic abuse co-ordinators.

How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?⁷

South Wales Police generally responds well to vulnerable victims. However, we found that the force's processes and systems are applied inconsistently.

Response officers

Officers who attend incidents complete a public protection notification document (PPN) which summarises the vulnerabilities of victims. This notice goes to the force public protection unit (PPU) which uses the information to assess the risk. A marker is created relating to the individual victim on the online intelligence system to indicate the level of risk to that victim. The force has guidance in place that outlines the process for completion of PPNs; however HMIC found that this is applied inconsistently. The force acknowledges that not all PPNs are checked by supervisors and as a consequence the force does not have a robust system to confirm that a PPN has been completed on every occasion by the responding officer.

If a PPN is submitted by frontline staff over the weekend period there is no assurance that high-risk cases will be identified immediately, by public protection unit (PPU) staff. At the time of our inspection there was a backlog of 357 PPNs awaiting checks within the PPU. While most of these would be low or medium risk, the safeguarding support for some high-risk victims may be delayed as a consequence. The force has PPU officers working at weekends to undertake assessments of submitted PPN's and is currently in the process of implementing the recommendations from a review of its public protection teams. This will see additional risk assessors working 7 days a week to support frontline officers.

Frontline staff are well prepared to deal with initial scene attendance and the initial investigation of cases involving vulnerable victims. The force has provided all frontline staff with comprehensive training for dealing with domestic abuse cases and child sexual exploitation. A programme of vulnerability training is being provided along with periodic force bulletins, screensaver messages and specific child sexual exploitation and domestic violence awareness campaigns.

Where safeguarding needs are identified the force responds appropriately. Frontline staff understand measures available to ensure that the force manages risk of harm effectively.

⁷ 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.

The PPU provides an important oversight function in many cases where safeguarding is required, assuring the quality of immediate safeguarding actions and assisting with subsequent safeguarding measures. In addition the missing person co-ordinators manage missing people with safeguarding issues.

Officers make immediate attempts to locate and arrest offenders to prevent them committing further offences against victims. Officers will seek a remand in custody to protect the victim if possible, and if not secured, will seek bail conditions.

Supervision of the response to vulnerable victims

The force has a well-established daily management meeting (DMM) process in each of its four BCUs to oversee the management of resources, the vulnerability of victims and the threat, risk and harm posed to them. The meetings have specific sections for child sexual exploitation, hate incidents, domestic violence and missing people. The DMM is attended by representatives from uniformed response officers, custody, public protection, missing person coordinators, and intelligence and HQ specialists, and is used by staff for local briefings.

High-risk domestic cases receive an immediate response with oversight from the response inspector. However, HMIC reviewed ten calls made to the control room and found inconsistencies in the quality of the assessment of threat, risk and harm and the absence of some records of risk assessments on the incident log.

HMIC found a 'tick box' culture of supervision of vulnerability files where the focus seemed to be on the completion of relevant forms rather than looking at the quality of the investigation. It was not clear in all cases the stage at which vulnerability was identified or if this was taken into account by the attending officers.

How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners to keep victims safe?⁸

South Wales Police generally provides vulnerable victims with a good service in relation to the investigation of offences. South Wales Police has well-developed joint working arrangements with partners focused on delivering services for vulnerable victims. The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH),⁹ in particular, has strong information-sharing agreements and is regarded by the force as a model for future development in dealing with vulnerable people.

Clear force governance, policy and practice are in place for the investigation of offences that involve children and vulnerable adults. During our inspection, we visited both the MASH in the northern BCU and the PPU and found staff who were skilled in dealing with both types of cases. This practice ensures resilience both in investigations and staffing, providing a more effective service for victims.

Investigation of crimes involving vulnerable people

The force makes appropriate use of specialist officers to support victims during investigations. Minor assaults in cases of domestic violence are investigated by uniformed staff but we found no evidence of officers not having the required skills. Investigations are consistent, timely and thorough and officers make good use of all possible forensic evidence. Where uniform officers carry out the investigation, the PPU is also involved in the safeguarding of the victim if appropriate.

However, the investigation of serious domestic abuse and assaults are dealt with by the investigation hubs, CID or uniform officers with limited experience or expertise in investigating these types of offences. This lack of specialist skills in a potentially high-risk area could result in victims not receiving the most suitable service to meet their needs. The allocation of investigative resource has real-time management oversight. The force is good at identifying risk and vulnerability, with oversight of these cases from the DMM, where appropriate.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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 ensures that the most appropriate response is provided to effectively safeguard and protect the individual.

However, the force uses both specialist and non-specialist staff to investigate domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation cases and consequently the most suitable officer to investigate an offence for a vulnerable victim may not always be allocated by the force to conduct that investigation.

HMIC reviewed 40 cases files as a part of this inspection.¹⁰ In the majority of cases vulnerability was identified at an early stage in the process; however the quality of investigation plans was variable and on occasions officers concentrated solely on the investigation rather than the support needed by the victim. Where officers identified vulnerability, they dealt with it well. Safeguarding requirements were identified and we saw clear and obvious safeguarding activity including work with partners to provide support for the victim, in particular through the independent sexual or domestic violence adviser (ISVA/IDVA) service and social services.

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 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 statement,¹¹ which they can use to explain how the crime has affected them. Victims should also be kept updated about the progress of their case.

In South Wales, frontline staff use a mnemonic called TRICK (time, reference inform, complete keep informed). This has proved to be an effective tool for officers in their care for victims, in line with the requirements of the code.

All files reviewed during our inspection included a victim contact plan at the outset. While this frequently lacked detail, there was evidence of the force making contact and giving updates to victims at key points of an investigation. Although officers give early consideration to special measures to support vulnerable victims through the criminal justice process, the completion of victim personal statements was not evident in all cases.

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 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 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.

Working with partners

South Wales Police has well-developed relationships and joint working arrangements in place with partners. This ensures that multi-agency agreements, focused on delivering services for vulnerable victims, are effective and address victims' needs. Three of the BCUs have referral units and the fourth (the northern BCU) has a MASH. The force uses its TRICK model to focus on delivering the key elements of service that matter to the victim. The MASH, in particular, has strong information-sharing agreements and will be the model for future force development in dealing with vulnerable people. We found evidence that the structure of the MASH, with staff from multiple agencies being co-located, has improved the timeliness and quality of information-sharing.

The force currently has one MASH in the northern BCU and with partners. It is considering plans to develop this concept across the force area. The MASH uses the DASH and missing person risk assessments. Following a review of these initial assessments, information-sharing protocols are applied to process the actions needed. The MASH is used effectively by the force to manage the risk of harm in these types of cases and safeguarding and handover to other professionals are well-managed by the force. Although partners use different IT and data collection systems they follow an all-Wales protocol on safeguarding and using a common risk assessment tool SERAF (sexual exploitation risk assessment form).

Victims referred to the MASH are risk-assessed. The protocols established as working practices mean that a Detective Inspector (DI) is responsible for safeguarding of victims and another DI is responsible for taking suitable cases forward for prosecution. This is a staged process, in which the safeguarding DI acts as a 'gatekeeper' for the investigation process. If the safeguarding of a victim would be compromised by proceeding to an investigation, the victim's safety would be prioritised and there would be no investigation.

To help ensure good decision-making around safeguarding for vulnerable victims, social workers work within the MASH. They are available 24/7 to be consulted on safeguarding measures for victims. This service is called the emergency duty team and provides operational staff with effective professional advice, which is likely to improve the quality of safeguarding measures implemented for victims outside of normal office hours.

Within the MASH, the force has developed an in-house IT system, called MHUB, which allows for police and multi-agency staff to manage the information relating to victims referred to the MASH. Each staff member within the MASH is vetted to enable confidential case information to be discussed freely, leading to effective case management.

Information or intelligence needed by operational staff to make instant safeguarding decisions is available from the MHUB system after sanitisation (removing any sensitive information) to protect the victim and sources. This sanitised information is copied directly to the force's online records management system, where it is available to non-MASH staff.

Frontline staff submit a PPN when attending incidents involving victims who are deemed vulnerable. This triggers responses from other internal specialist units such as the PPU, as well as partnership referrals to health, social services and third sector organisations. The force has a cohesive joint working relationship with the IDVAs. Operation Grey Eagle is an example of a partnership initiative where there is joint attendance to incidents of domestic abuse by both the police and IDVAs.

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.

Missing and absent children

South Wales Police has a limited understanding of the nature and scale of missing persons.¹² The force has produced a problem profile of child sexual exploitation and missing persons for all BCUs, which aims to establish the level, patterns and profile of missing persons and their vulnerability. However, the profiles do not take in to account the location or circumstances of where the missing person was found.

As with the other three Welsh forces, South Wales Police is a party to the 'All Wales' child protection procedures and missing persons protocol.

The force's strategic assessment identifies that care homes and hospitals are the principle source of reports of missing people. The assessment acknowledges that the force does not fully understand the extent to which the threat of street grooming of vulnerable young people in the care system exists.

¹² 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 missing the police are obliged to take steps to locate them, as the level of perceived risk is higher.

Data from the force identified that there were 5,373 reports of missing persons in the 12 months to March 2015. Although the force defines repeat missing persons as those who have been missing three times in 90 days, it did not provide HMIC with data in relation to the number of repeat missing children or child abduction warning notices.¹³

Four missing person co-ordinators have been introduced in South Wales and are beginning to provide management information for their respective BCUs in relation to 'top ten' repeat missing people. They are all experienced police officers, although they have not had any structured training or induction for their roles. These officers coordinate tasks and liaise with other services, such as care homes and education welfare. The management of missing persons is a high priority for the force at an operational level and staff demonstrated a good understanding of the potential risks to people who go missing, particularly those who are more vulnerable. However, we found that South Wales has no BCU or force-level governance structure in place to understand repeat and vulnerable missing persons in order to guide the force's safeguarding activity.

The force has clear assessment processes to assess the level of risk to children who go missing. Control room staff have a standard set of questions and in the incidents we reviewed this was used on each occasion. The force does not use the absent category¹⁴ and consequently officers are deployed to every report of a missing person. However, we found that while there are various local and force level meetings that discuss and manage missing people, there is no dedicated BCU or force-level governance structure in place to understand repeat and vulnerable missing persons in order to oversee and guide safeguarding across the force.

We found that the force carries out immediate safe and well checks inconsistently when missing persons are found or return home. Checks are either conducted by response officers, IDVAs or the missing person co-ordinators, determined by their availability. This also applies to the local authority's return to home interviews.¹⁵

¹³ Child abduction warning notices can be issued against individuals who are suspected of grooming children by stating that they have no permission to associate with the named child and that if they do so they can be arrested under the Child Abduction Act 1984 and Children Act 1989.

¹⁴ Absent is defined as "a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be."

¹⁵ Safe and well checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after the child has returned. Their purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.

An independent return interview is an in-depth interview best carried out by an independent person who is trained to carry out these interviews and can follow-up any actions that emerge. The responsible local authority should ensure the return interview takes place.

Child sexual exploitation preparedness

This inspection has focused on actions and activities the force has taken to understand and identify the extent to which children are at risk of child sexual exploitation and the policies and practices 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. South Wales Police was the subject of such an inspection in 2015 and the report was published in July 2015.

In 2014 South Wales Police made a request to the College of Policing to undertake a peer to peer inspection of the force regarding its management of child sexual exploitation. The inspection took place in March 2015 and the findings clearly noted the journey that the force was on to comprehensively address child sexual exploitation. They also noted the gains made by practitioners to improve multi-agency safeguarding and reactive investigations. The report identified areas for improvement, in particular the need for the force to "get upstream" of the problem in identifying pre-cursor signs of victimisation and offending.

Tackling child sexual exploitation is very clearly a force priority. The police and crime commissioner, with the chief constable, has commissioned a review into every aspect of the police response and works with partners to tackle child sexual exploitation in South Wales. In response to recommendations from HMIC's national child protection inspection in 2015, the force is in the process of developing a set of performance indicators and a performance management presentation for intelligence, incidents and crimes involving child protection issues, including child sexual exploitation. A comprehensive child sexual exploitation action plan is in place which includes all the relevant actions and recommendations for the force.

The force problem profile¹⁶ for child sexual exploitation is very high-level and does not include specific detail about victims, perpetrators or locations. The force has only very recently implemented a flagging system to identify these groups for its child sexual exploitation problem profile. Data obtained by this flagging system is very limited and does not show the full extent of the problem. The force has acknowledged this limitation in its force strategic assessment.

¹⁶ A problem profile is usually commissioned to provide a greater understanding of established and emerging crime, incidents, locations or high risk issues. They are produced by analysts, intelligence officers and policing units.

Force representation at local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs)¹⁷ is managed locally on the BCUs. The force does provide data to each of the three LSCBs about child sexual exploitation and is included in the force tasking and coordinating group processes. The force manages perpetrators through its tasking and coordinating processes and DMMs in each of the BCUs. This has resulted in a number of organised crime groups being identified and mapped.

Public Service Centre staff and all frontline staff have received specific child sexual exploitation training. The force recognises that this must be a continuous programme supported by an evaluation process to assess and understand its effectiveness.

Three of the BCUs have referral units and the fourth (the northern BCU) has a MASH. These units assess risk in relation to children (including child sexual exploitation and missing persons). Frontline officers submit PPN forms to help identify and assess the level of risk to a victim. These are then examined by specialists overseen by supervisors within the PPU and where necessary a strategy discussion/meeting is arranged.

The force uses a voluntary organisation to conduct some return to home interviews when children have been missing. The purpose of these is to provide support, identify child sexual exploitation risk and make onward referrals to children's social care. A successful joint innovation fund bid from the force and the police and crime commissioner means that a co-ordinator and an advocate for child sexual exploitation work for each BCU is to be recruited. The force plans to locate these new staff with the missing person co-ordinators in each referral unit/MASH and provide supportive and diversionary services to those deemed to be at risk of child sexual exploitation. In addition, all missing person return interviews will also be conducted by these child sexual exploitation advocates.

To enhance victim and witness care, including children for rape and sexual offences, South Wales Police uses the services of three sexual assault referral centres (SARCs). These mean that for the victims of sexual offences, examination, interview, crisis support, counselling and support through the criminal justice process through use of independent sexual violence advisers (ISVAs) are all provided in one place.

The Welsh Assembly has provided the force with additional funds to keep school liaison officers. They are involved in providing training packages to pupils, staff and parents in relation to child sexual exploitation, sexting, consent and healthy relationships. In addition, they also support pupils who may be at risk of sexual exploitation.

¹⁷ Local 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.

The central BCU has recently created a child sexual exploitation team, to understand better those children at risk and gather intelligence to target their highest-risk offenders/suspects. The BCU has reviewed all children flagged with a vulnerability marker and shared this information with local authorities. From an initial list of 150 children flagged on the system, 44 children have been identified as being at risk. The team has also conducted an intelligence assessment of convicted and suspected offenders in child sexual exploitation, prioritising investigations involving their most dangerous suspects.

The force is developing a 'vulnerability toolkit' to provide intelligence packages to the four basic command units (BCUs) to manage potential victims of child sexual exploitation. The toolkit is being developed in-house and is a flexible system which can overlay a number of sets of data from other sources including that of partners. The toolkit is not yet in place across the force.

During our inspection, HMIC was briefed on Operation Blue Capri. This provided us with clear evidence of a significant investigation into child sexual abuse and exploitation, with the force engaging with other agencies to share learning and organisational development.

Domestic abuse

High-risk victims of domestic abuse receive a high level of service and care from South Wales Police. Patrol and specialist officers demonstrated a genuine commitment to serving vulnerable people in their communities and child and adult protection cases received an enhanced service from specialist staff that met the needs of victims. The force works productively with its IDVAs and other voluntary sector parties involved in providing services to vulnerable victims.

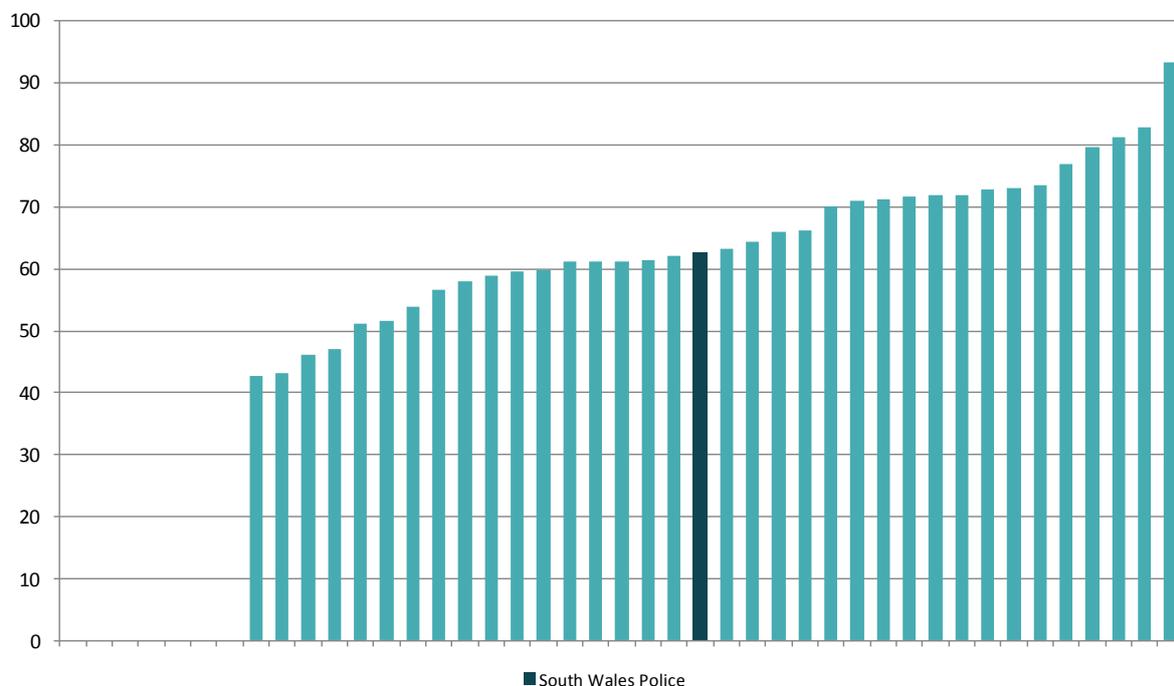
As a result of a review of violence against women and girls in South Wales conducted by the force in 2013, the police and crime commissioner commissioned a plan to improve the partnership response to domestic abuse, sexual violence and other forms of violence against women and girls in South Wales.

South Wales Police has made progress in addressing the recommendations HMIC made in its domestic abuse inspection in 2014. From the nine recommendations made following that inspection, there is only one recommendation that remains a work in progress. There were a further six recommendations from the follow up report in 2015, of which two remain works in progress.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 29 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 South Wales Police made 62 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

High-risk cases of domestic abuse are dealt with to a high standard and are safeguarded and protected by domestic abuse officers, IDVAs and staff from other agencies. Patrol and specialist officers demonstrated a genuine commitment to serving vulnerable people in their communities. Public protection officers and staff working in the MASH focused on evaluating the risk of harm correctly and taking effective measure to provide appropriate safeguarding to those cases referred to their units. The force has appointed a detective sergeant and a detective constable to administer all case conferences, strategy meetings and other safeguarding meetings within the area serviced by the MASH. This reduces demand on officers directly involved in investigating safeguarding cases, allowing them to focus more clearly on managing their workloads promptly.

However, the force provides an inconsistent service to cases of domestic abuse assessed as having standard and medium risk. We found little or no structure in relation to how that service is provided. In some instances there is also duplication of service from domestic abuse officers (DAOs) and IDVAs to high-risk victims, with both teams providing the same type and quality of service. At the time of our inspection, there was a backlog of PPNs. These are prioritised in line with their risk grading (low, medium, or high). Those that are graded high-risk are dealt with quickly, but the remaining cases may wait in a queue without a review as to the

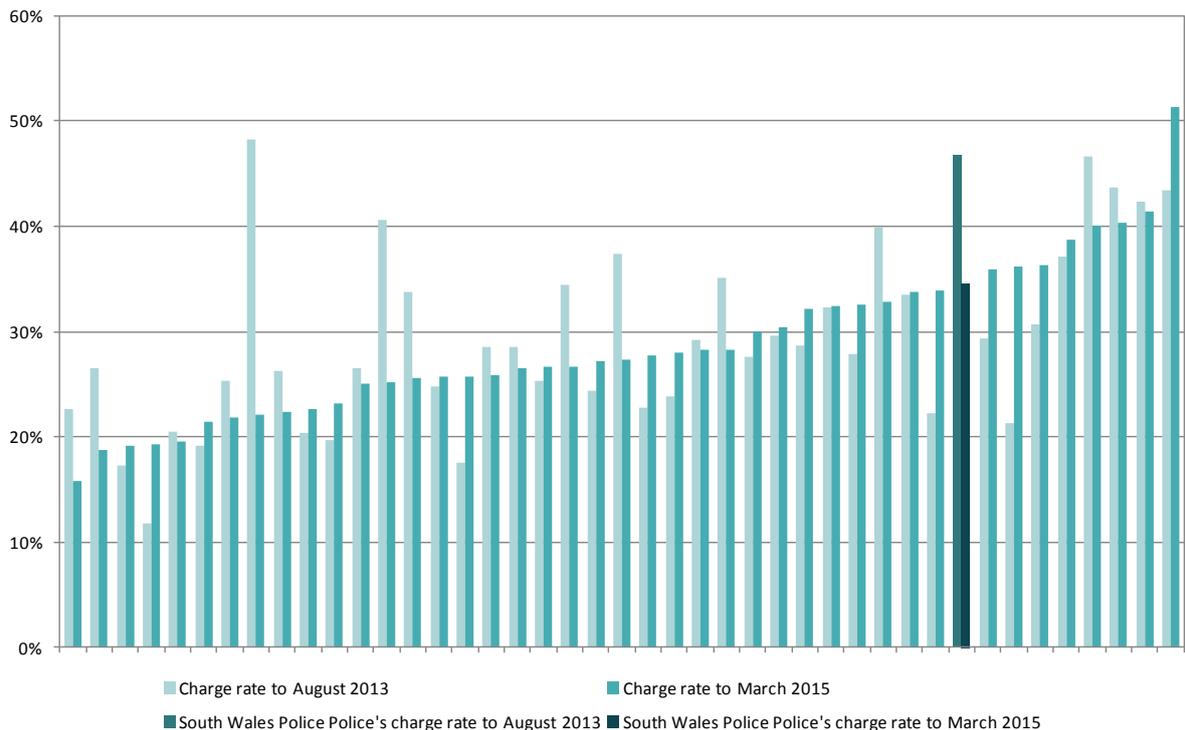
ongoing risk, potentially exposing victims to preventable harm. For example, in one BCU, 95 PPNs were waiting to be risk-assessed, the oldest being 19 days old. All of the PPNs waiting for assessment had been categorised initially as low-risk and some of these are likely to be re-classified as medium or high-risk when assessed fully.

The force has developed an information management tool for domestic abuse (DAMIT). This is a web-based tool which identifies repeat callers of domestic abuse and calls from the previous 24 hours by BCU. It records how many times a victim has been linked to a domestic abuse incident within the last week, month, three months and year. This information can be accessed by officers and will identify the repeat victims and whether there is an increase in the abuse.

Officers view the positive action clause within the force's domestic abuse policy as a positive arrest policy. Officers felt that there was strong pressure from management, and a culture of accountability, surrounding the arrest of those suspected of committing domestic violence. This mechanical approach to dealing with the perpetrator does not take into account the best interests of the victim in every case. In some cases, it may prove harmful to the interests of the victim, and could even significantly raise the level of risk.

The force's charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 35 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 47 percent for the 12 months to 31 August 2013, compared with 30 percent for England and Wales. These data support the views expressed to us by officers.

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

We found a lack of specialist domestic abuse training for those acting as DAOs, IDVAs, vulnerability risk assessors, and missing person coordinators. Police training in dealing with domestic abuse has been provided to these staff, but this training has not provided the depth of knowledge to enable staff to understand fully, and as a result provide services competently to those involved in domestic abuse cases.

Frontline officers understand the risk assessment process and are very clearly focused on taking positive action at the scene. Responding officers are required to complete a PPN to assess the vulnerability and level of risk to the victim of domestic abuse. In February 2015 the force policy was changed to ensure that a PPN was completed in all cases, including those incidents of verbal argument or abuse, which had not previously been the case. This change in policy was not well-understood by staff, including managers across the force.

While frontline officers identified the importance of responding to and protecting vulnerable people, HMIC found no structured supervision or management of victim-focused activity such as PPN completion, victim personal statements, special measures or victim contracts. The force records no information or data relating to the quality of service it provides to domestic abuse victims. This prevents staff and supervisors identifying good or poor performance or identifying opportunities to review and improve service delivery. The Public Protection Unit (PPU) unit is developing a performance framework.

This should include clear governance structures and lines of accountability at force and BCU level, as well as routine checking mechanisms and quality assurance processes in this area.

The domestic abuse unit sits within the PPU in each BCU and is supported by the IDVAs. However, as there is no single employer of IDVA services across the South Wales force area, we found an imbalance of IDVA resources serving the two largest populated areas of Wales. Cardiff has fifteen IDVAs, but the area of Swansea, Neath and Port Talbot which has a greater female population than Cardiff has only three IDVAs. Domestic abuse training has been provided to IDVAs by SafeLives, the Home Officer endorsed provider of specialist IDVA training. The course takes six months to complete and comprises of a number of modules. SafeLives informed the force that in 2014 there were 14 trained IDVAs which has increased to 20 across the force in October 2015. However, none of the IDVAs to whom we spoke had received any specialist domestic abuse training, and it was apparent from focus groups and reality checks that procedures and practices are inconsistently applied across the force.

MARACs¹⁸ are held fortnightly to review cases involving high-risk domestic abuse and are chaired by the local PPU detective inspector. Over 2,565 referrals were made to MARAC during 2014/15. Other agencies such as social services, health, education and housing are appropriately represented to cover the needs of the victim and they manage jointly the safeguarding issues. DAOs are responsible for ensuring the safeguarding of high risk victims through the MARAC (although they are not assigned individual cases) and we found clear use of safety plans and victim visits including joint visits with social services. This is a very similar role to the IDVAs, who are also focused on high-risk victims. IDVAs are responsible for attending the specialist domestic violence courts for all victim cases.

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 July 2014; it made 19 applications to magistrates' courts for their use, of which 13 were granted. Three 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 23 percent compared with the England and Wales rate of 17 percent.¹⁹

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ The England and Wales figure is based on data provided by 35 forces.

HMIC found clear processes in place during reality checks of a local PPU, where good examples were provided of the use of these powers. The number of DVPOs applied for and secured by the force is relatively small, when compared to other forces.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

South Wales Police identifies and supports vulnerable victims effectively. Domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation are priorities for the force. Staff are clear that the victim's needs are paramount and demonstrate this in their daily activity. The force generally provides vulnerable victims with a good service when investigating offences. The force has well-developed partnerships, focused on providing services for vulnerable victims to meet the needs of victims.

South Wales Police has a good understanding of local crime trends and patterns of offending. The force's control strategy, which gives an overview of the current and long-term issues affecting or likely to affect communities, highlights vulnerability as a priority. The force is developing a vulnerability tool kit to map the locations of victims and perpetrators and to identify vulnerable children who may become victims of child sexual exploitation.

The force provides a good level of service to high-risk victims of domestic abuse, but less so for standard and medium-risk victims. Domestic abuse is very clearly a priority for the force and is seen as important to frontline staff. The force does not fully understand the nature and scale of missing persons. The force is working on its preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its initial response to incidents by ensuring that call handlers complete assessments of threat, risk and harm to appropriate standards and consistently record them on force systems.
- The force should improve its investigations of cases involving vulnerable victims, specifically victims of domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation, by ensuring that cases are allocated to officers with the appropriate professional skills and expertise to carry out such investigations and these are effectively supervised.
- The force should improve its response to persistent and repeat missing children and those children at risk of sexual exploitation by developing its understanding of the scale and nature of the issue, and ensuring effective oversight of safeguarding activity.
- The force should improve its response to domestic abuse by ensuring that it provides victims of cases assessed at standard and medium risk with an effective and consistent safeguarding service. The force should further review its domestic abuse policy and the interpretation of it by frontline officers, to ensure that appropriate action is taken against perpetrators of domestic abuse. The force should also ensure that it has processes in place to assess and refer public protection notifications in a timely manner.