

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of West Yorkshire Police



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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?.....	8
How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?.....	11
How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners to keep victims safe?	13
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?	15
Summary of findings	23

Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

West Yorkshire
Police

278

England and Wales

350

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

West Yorkshire
Police

18.0

England and Wales

15.8



Crime

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

West Yorkshire
Police

69.7

England and Wales

61.6

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

West Yorkshire
Police

-1%

England and Wales

+2.2%

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

West Yorkshire
Police

1.8%

England and Wales

10.7%

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

West Yorkshire
Police

9.6%

England and Wales

10.0%

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

West Yorkshire
Police

+21.2%

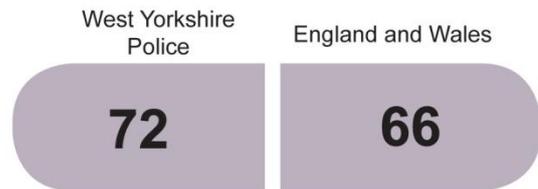
England and Wales

+20.8%



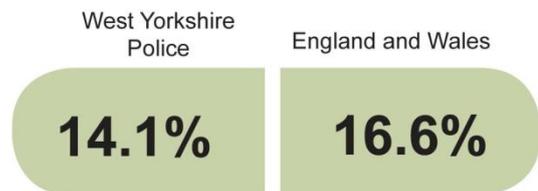
Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

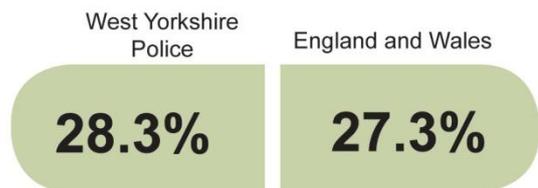


Charge rate

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

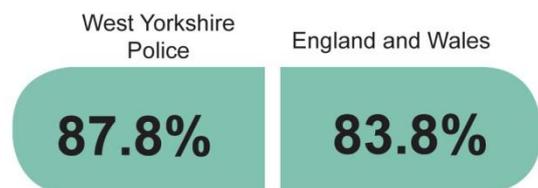


Domestic abuse charge rate as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015



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 West Yorkshire Police.

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

Summary



Requires improvement

West Yorkshire Police has a clear focus on protecting those who are most vulnerable and supporting victims. However, there are several areas where improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent force-wide and that vulnerable people are kept safe. Given the scale of the challenge and the risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall, HMIC judges that the force requires improvement.

HMIC acknowledges that the force has committed significant effort and resource to offer a high-quality service to the public on vulnerability issues and supporting victims. The force has completed a review of its safeguarding provision and has implemented a number of changes to try to ensure a consistent approach across the force to safeguarding those who are vulnerable. The police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the force have committed additional funding and resources to vulnerability. This supports the force's strategic priorities within the PCC's police and crime plan and addresses the recommendations made in HMIC's crime inspection report published in November 2014 and its report on the inspection of child protection services within West Yorkshire Police published in January 2015. Both reports are available on HMIC's website, www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications

The force has strong partnership arrangements for vulnerability which are developing. Each of the five policing districts is implementing a multi-agency team or hub. The hubs are at various stages of maturity and each has a number of different agencies working together in the same office. This reflects a mature relationship between police and local partners. It is also a good example of the progress the force has made since its last domestic abuse inspection in 2014.

The force has clear structures and processes to find missing and absent children, but there is an element of confusion about victims categorised as low-risk. Across the force there remain some variances in who deals with victims of domestic abuse, depending on where the victims live. Not all victims in West Yorkshire are offered the opportunity to make a personal statement at the appropriate time.

This inspection only considered how well prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. The development of multi-agency hubs to work with partners in keeping children safe has helped extend partnership work. The force has expanded its approach to child sexual exploitation with its investment in dedicated resources to

tackle child sexual exploitation and to develop the understanding of historical incidents of child sexual exploitation. The force was also subject to a re-inspection of its child protection services. The more detailed findings from that re-inspection, which has yet to be published, 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?

West Yorkshire Police is good at identifying those who are vulnerable and assessing the risk that they face and what is needed to keep them safe. It has a clear focus on protecting those who are most vulnerable and supporting victims.

In March 2015, the chief officer team agreed a number of recommendations from an internal review of providing safeguarding¹ services. These were implemented to ensure a consistent approach to safeguarding across the force, along with addressing recommendations the force had received within HMIC inspection reports (crime and domestic abuse inspections in 2014 and child protection services in 2015) and supporting key priorities within the police and crime plan.

The force has clear policies and guidance in place for those groups who are vulnerable. It has identified and set its strategic priorities in relation to those who are most vulnerable. To improve its understanding of the scale and nature of crimes against vulnerable victims, the force uses an annual strategic assessment as well as bespoke analytical products in relation to significant areas of vulnerability such as child sexual exploitation.

Identifying those who are vulnerable

Staff in the force contact centre are suitably trained and experienced at extracting the relevant information from callers and making initial judgements on risk and the urgency of the call. When victims telephone the force contact centre, staff answering their calls use a risk assessment tool. This helps them to consider consistently the threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement (THRIVE) potential of calls for service.

¹ The term safeguarding means providing protection and support to ensure the safety of the vulnerable person and prevent further harm.

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.

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

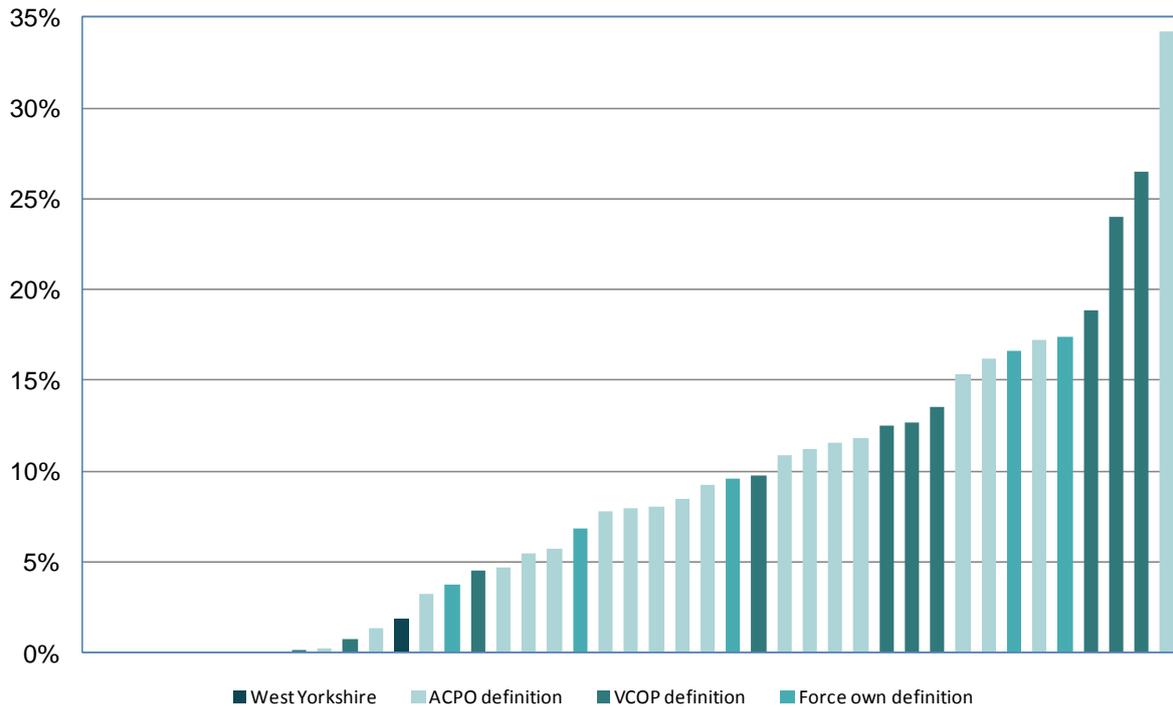
“Any person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental, physical, or learning disability, age or illness AND is or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.”

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, 1.8 percent of all recorded crimes in West 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.

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

³ The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is now the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). *ACPO Guidance on Safeguarding and Investigating the Abuse of Vulnerable Adults*, NPIA, 2012, is available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/vulnerable-adults/

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

Incidents that require a police response are sent to each of the five district control rooms, where the history and vulnerability of callers is assessed and officer deployments are then managed. Staff within the control room have access to force IT systems which can identify the history of the caller and previous incidents that the police have been made aware of about the caller. This includes identifying if the victim is a repeat caller to the police or has been a previous victim of crime. This assists the force in assessing who are the most vulnerable people and what is the most appropriate response which can be given to the victim.

Any areas that are identified as high-risk during this process, such as a high-risk missing from home person, are highlighted to the control room manager who is an inspector or sergeant/ supervisor, dependent on the district. The manager reviews the incident, with the assistance of a real-time investigator and researcher. They can access other IT systems and quickly make enquiries such as health and social media enquiries to provide additional information to contribute to the overall risk assessment. The force also has access to health services such as mental health triage staff within the control room that can assist with ensuring the correct services are provided to vulnerable people at an early stage.

The force IT system can be updated for staff to highlight or flag individuals who have been identified as vulnerable such as those at risk of child sexual exploitation or domestic abuse. The systems also can flag and identify repeat victims and repeat callers to the police. This information is used to assess the vulnerability of individuals.

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

HMIC found that in West Yorkshire the requirements of some vulnerable groups are better understood than others. For example, the force has a good understanding of the needs of people who are vulnerable because of domestic abuse, and responds to these well. It has a good understanding of risks relating to vulnerable people who are missing from home and responds well to high and medium-risk cases; but it could improve its response to cases assessed as low-risk. The force is developing its understanding of child sexual exploitation and identifying potential, current, and historic victims.

In order to provide the most appropriate support to vulnerable victims, the force and the police and crime commissioner have invested in resources. For example, the force has:

- aligned an additional 120 police officers with safeguarding functions, equating to an increased expenditure on safeguarding resources of around £6m;
- developed further its partnership working and multi-agency safeguarding hubs within each district; and
- allocated dedicated resources to tackle child sexual exploitation.

How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?⁴

West Yorkshire Police generally responds well to vulnerable victims. The force demand management policy document outlines the graded responses used within West Yorkshire. The response by officers and staff is expected to link to the vulnerability and risk in each call for service. The considerations for the grading are heavily influenced and weighted towards vulnerability.

⁴ 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 staff we spoke to during the inspection are aware of what makes people vulnerable and see it as their priority to keep those people safe. While they may not have been able to define vulnerability, we found staff were able to articulate the risk factors, both personal and circumstantial, which would make someone vulnerable. Most felt vulnerability could be due to the personal situation for the individual, along with the circumstances they were in at that time, and staff used their professional judgment to assist with identifying vulnerable people.

We found shift briefings for response officers can vary. Briefings concentrate on crime trends and offenders who were wanted by the police for various offences. Briefings include some elements of vulnerability, such as updating officers with details of people who are missing from home, but we saw only limited evidence of actions being allocated in the meetings in relation to vulnerability.

Response officers

HMIC found that officers who respond to vulnerable incidents are knowledgeable and supportive of those who need support and safeguarding. Those attending are aware of the factors which would make someone vulnerable and how to help them. Officers are aware of the need to complete a risk assessment while at the incident and ensure the level of risk and safeguarding is appropriate to the incident and personal circumstances.

Supervision of the response to vulnerable victims

Supervision and management of vulnerable incidents starts within the district control room. Any incidents of risk are reviewed by the inspector or supervisor. This ensures the level of risk is assessed correctly and that the response by the police is appropriate.

The senior officers from each district review further the response to threat, risk, and harm each morning. This review checks the level of response given to vulnerable victims and ensures the correct resources are working to safeguard individuals. For instance, reports of children missing from home are routinely reviewed.

The force uses the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and honour based violence (DASH)⁵ risk assessment form to assess and record the levels of risk with victims of domestic violence. The assessment is generally discussed with supervisors while officers are at the scene or taking a report of domestic violence and the risk assessment level is then agreed.

⁵ 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?⁶

The force has strong and developing partnership arrangements for managing vulnerability issues. Each of the five policing districts is implementing a multi-agency team or hub appropriate to the size and needs of the district. The hubs are at various stages of maturity and each have a number of different agencies working together in the same office. This reflects a mature relationship between police and local partners.

However, the force process for allocating investigations is not consistent, for example for domestic abuse, and does not necessarily have a vulnerability-based approach.

Investigation of crimes involving vulnerable people

HMIC reviewed 60 investigations⁷, 28 of which were identified as involving a vulnerable person. We found that generally the force was good at effectively identifying vulnerability at an early stage. Where vulnerability was identified it was dealt with well in the vast majority of cases with clear and obvious safeguarding activity.

Each of the force's five policing districts has a dedicated resource or unit available for safeguarding and protecting those who are vulnerable. Our reality-testing identified the commitment and drive from staff to support the community and victims. As the force invests resources into the safeguarding units, it is providing officers with specialist training courses to ensure they have the right set of skills to provide specialist investigations.

Across the force there remain some variances in who deals with victims of domestic abuse. All high-risk cases are dealt with by a specialist investigator. However a medium or standard-risk victim may receive service either from a response officer or a specialist investigator, dependent on where the victim lives. The force should review the process for allocating investigations to ensure a more consistent and a vulnerability-based approach.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

We found that the force uses one IT system to report all incidents of missing persons, but it uses various IT systems for its investigation and management of missing from home enquiries. This is dependent on the policing district and the grading of the missing person. Missing from home co-ordinators are assigned to each district, but the location within the district structure varies from working within the command hub to being posted to the child sexual exploitation team.

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 statement⁸ which they can use to explain how the crime has affected them. However, HMIC found that not all victims in West Yorkshire are offered this opportunity at the appropriate time. The force needs to make sure this is explained and offered consistently, and in good time.

Victims should also be kept updated about the progress of their case. Generally, West Yorkshire Police does this well. We reviewed ten high-risk domestic violence cases during the inspection. In all the cases reviewed, there was documented evidence that the officer had updated the victim on the outcome of the case.

The provision of attending court and updating victims of domestic abuse also varied between districts. This may result in an inequality of service to victims of domestic abuse.

Working with partners

The force has strong and developing partnership arrangements for vulnerability. Each district has a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)⁹ or equivalent. The hubs are at various stages of maturity, but all have a commitment from partner organisations. Different agencies work together in districts in the same office and can share more information more quickly. This means they conduct more effective assessments of new cases, and, where relevant, initiate and conduct the joint investigation. This is a promising initiative, which reflects a mature relationship between police and local partners.

⁸ 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.

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

It is also a good example of progress the force has made since its last domestic abuse inspection in 2014. The force needs to continue to build on the work so far to ensure the approach continues to develop a high-quality service.

Each of the five policing districts has a child sexual exploitation sub-group within the local safeguarding children's board (LSCB).¹⁰ Each sub-group includes police representatives, with three of the five being chaired by the police. The force has a multi-agency risk assessment tool agreed across the force area to ensure a consistent referral process and assessment into services.

For domestic abuse, the force recognises those who are most at risk and specialist investigators and services are available to support victims. There are a number of independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) and independent sexual violence advisers (ISVAs) to support vulnerable victims. We found that there is a mixed coverage across the five force districts. Kirklees, for instance, recognises it is under-resourced with IDVAs and has obtained funding and partnership support to increase the number in the near future.

The force has well established multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)¹¹ in each of the five policing districts. The meetings are held with partner organisations to provide safeguarding priorities to victims of high-risk domestic abuse. As part of the inspection, HMIC observed two MARACs. We found that the meetings identify and track effectively the activity to be undertaken to safeguard those victims at high-risk of domestic violence.

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.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ MARACs (multi-agency risk assessment conferences) are local meetings where information about high-risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies.

Missing and absent children

While there is a good response to missing and absent¹² children in the force, there are areas where it could improve. The force has a joint procedure for dealing with missing children which has been agreed with all local authorities. This outlines the minimum standards to be undertaken by carers and local authorities for reporting missing children. Referrals to the police should take place only after initial activity has been carried out by the carers. An immediate referral to the police would be made if the definition of missing has been met and there is an element of risk to the child such as child sexual exploitation. The actions undertaken by the force are then governed by national and force policy, and the activity by the local authorities is outlined and defined within the protocol. This results in all authorities following the same process. The safeguarding children procedure sets out the requirement for the consideration and use of 'harbourer's warnings', for people who harbour children that go missing.

Missing from home trends and patterns are used effectively to help inform how safeguarding resources are allocated. The safeguarding units receive analysis of data to support their safeguarding duties. For instance, the analysis identifying a district's top ten missing persons has enabled better partnership working, including sharing information to set prevention plans in place for those who are regularly reported as missing. Some districts have also identified the top locations from where individuals go missing. This has started to inform prevention activity with the managers from those venues. This includes the use of the Herbert Protocol,¹³ which is used to share information and better inform the police activity on people with dementia/Alzheimer's. The protocol is used to help predict the actions of someone with dementia and arrange prevention opportunities, for example, encouraging someone to wear a watch with a tracker or installing a timed door alarm.

Reports of missing persons are assessed using the THRIVE risk assessment with a grading applied dependent on risk. All missing persons are recorded on a force IT system and are circulated on the police national computer. High-risk missing person investigations are managed by the control room inspector, with response supervision managing medium and low-risk incidents. However, we found some confusion within districts regarding the approach to low-risk victims where the force uses absence or low categories which mean that no one will be sent from the force: called non-deployment decisions. Medium and high-risk categories are clearly defined and used within districts. Missing from home co-ordinators are assigned to each district to support the investigations and safeguarding activity within the district.

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

¹³ Named after George Herbert, a former war veteran who had dementia and lived in a care home.

The force works closely with those who have been missing from home and seeks feedback from them. Missing from home return-interviews are completed by partner agencies after the initial police visit has been conducted to ensure the individual is safe and well.

During the inspection we reviewed six cases of missing children. We found that the initial response was suitable and timely, with good rationale for the grade being recorded in five out of six. In two investigations intelligence within the force IT system linked the missing person to potentially being at risk of child sexual exploitation. Neither case had an intelligence flag highlighting this risk on the system. The intelligence and increased risk was however acknowledged within the command and control system and was taken into consideration during the risk assessment and grading of the missing person. There was good evidence of a referral to other partner agencies, in respect of children, and in the case of a medium-risk adult a referral was made to adult services. There was clear evidence within the case file of the family or concerned person who reported the person missing from home being kept updated as to the progression of the enquiries to find the missing person. We found that the investigation plans were tailored to each individual enquiry, were updated appropriately and in some cases a review of the investigation was very well-documented. Information is shared between partners such as social services, to identify lines of enquiry to find the person. In most, but not all, of the six cases the return interviews were well documented.

Preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation

West Yorkshire Police is working hard to tackle child sexual exploitation which is a high priority for the force. The force has identified child sexual exploitation as one of its strategic priorities, through the annual strategic assessment. Analytical products have been produced in relation to vulnerability and child sexual exploitation, to improve the force's understanding of the scale and nature of crimes against vulnerable victims. This inspection has focused on actions and activities the force has taken to understand and identify the extent to which children are at risk of child sexual exploitation and the policies, practices and procedures it is putting in place to tackle this. It did not test the quality of how the force conducted these complex investigations with other agencies such as children's services as these issues are covered in HMIC's rolling programme of child protection inspections.¹⁴

The force recognises that child sexual exploitation continues and that there will also be historical incidents which have not yet been reported to the police. The force is trying to understand better the historical issues and identify potential victims of child sexual exploitation. It is using analysis of police and partners' information to try and identify who may have been at risk of child sexual exploitation historically. This is

¹⁴ HMIC's National Child Protection Inspections: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/child-abuse-and-child-protection-issues/national-child-protection-inspection/

very positive and demonstrates the force's commitment to understand and deal with incidents of child sexual exploitation. The force has mapped child sexual exploitation within organised crime and is using a partnership approach of working with other organisations to identify those who are at risk. Each district has a multi-agency meeting to review cases and individuals, share information, and safeguard those who are at risk.

We found that the force has formed excellent relationships with partner agencies in particular in their common mission to protect and safeguard children. There are now relationships with statutory and third sector agencies at strategic and tactical level. The partnership has seen police and local authority co-located in many police stations and local authority buildings, with common goals to protect and safeguard children. Staff from different agencies have gained an important understanding of each other's role and work jointly together both in and out of the office.

Within the force IT systems there is the ability to highlight or flag those who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation, to ensure that the correct risk assessment and response is made when those individuals come to the notice of the police. The force is aware that there has been an under-use or varied standard being applied to the child sexual exploitation flagging process. The force has developed a minimum standard of recording to address the issue. It is also reviewing all current records on the force systems to ensure accuracy of recording and risk assessment.

The force policy details a series of tactical options for the disruption and investigation of child sexual exploitation. This includes raising awareness within professionals and the community such as schools, children's homes, hotels, and the taxi licensing community.

If a risk of child sexual exploitation is identified the force policy is that a so-called management occurrence must be made for the child within the force IT system. This signifies that action must be taken. A multi-agency risk assessment is then made and the safeguarding referrals are made to partner agencies. Each district has a multi-agency meeting to review cases and individuals, share information and safeguard those who are at risk.

Each district has a safeguarding team with resources dedicated to the investigation and prevention of child sexual exploitation. The force has taken a proactive approach using an algorithm to identify potential victims of historic incidents of child sexual exploitation by identifying known factors which potentially see children at risk of child sexual exploitation. It has analysed both police and partner information to identify those who may be historical victims. Work is continuing within the districts in relation to this approach and the force is seeking to apply academic rigour to the process. This is a very positive approach and demonstrates the force's commitment to understand and deal with incidents of child sexual exploitation more effectively.

Domestic abuse

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 21 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 10 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.

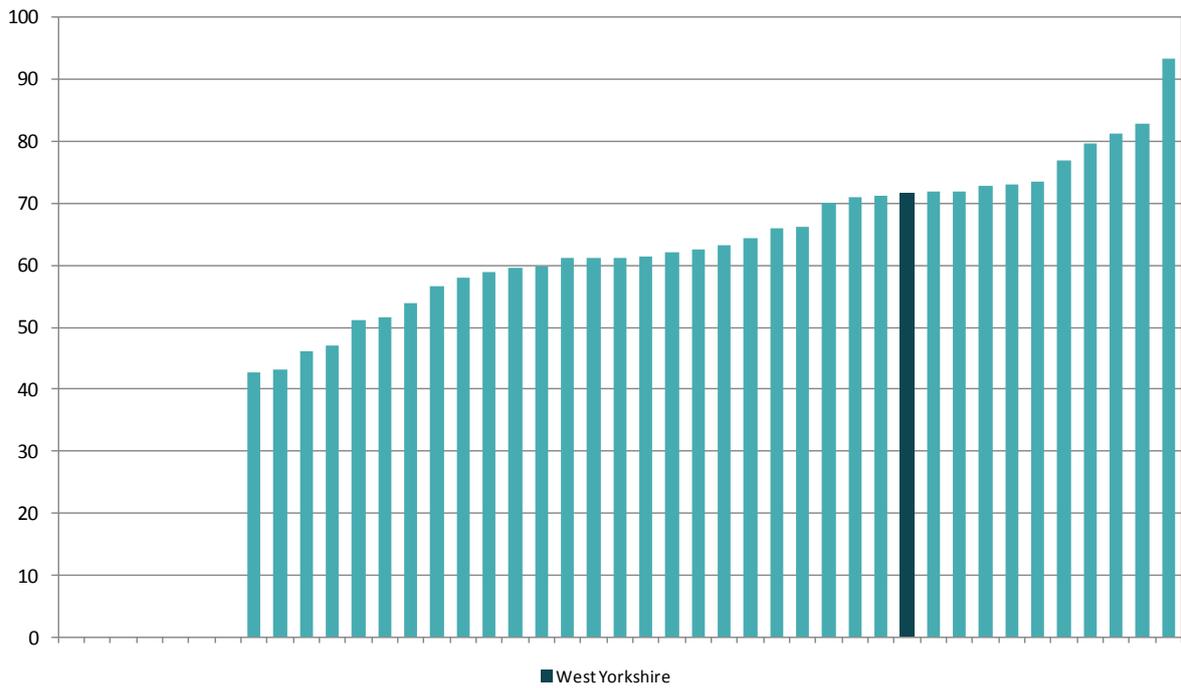
In March 2014, HMIC published the results of its inspection of 43 forces on the effectiveness of the police approach to domestic violence, with a focus on outcomes for victims and whether risks to victims are adequately managed. This included clear recommendations for each force about improvements it should make. The report found that while tackling domestic abuse is a priority for West Yorkshire Police, there were some risks and inconsistencies.

The force is addressing effectively the seven recommendations made in the report. In March 2015 the force introduced a 'common standards interventions for victims of domestic abuse' document, to ensure a consistent approach across the five force districts. The force also conducted a force-wide safeguarding review, and implemented its domestic abuse policy and action plans.

The force views safeguarding as a priority. Following the assessment of risk through the domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and honour based violence (DASH) form, the level of risk is discussed and agreed with a supervisor. This then prompts safeguarding activity, dependent on the levels of risk, with a range of activities being undertaken with both police and partners to support the victim. Those who are at the highest risk are provided with the most intensive support which is managed through a partnership meeting.

As shown in figure 2, for every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded West Yorkshire Police made 72 arrests.

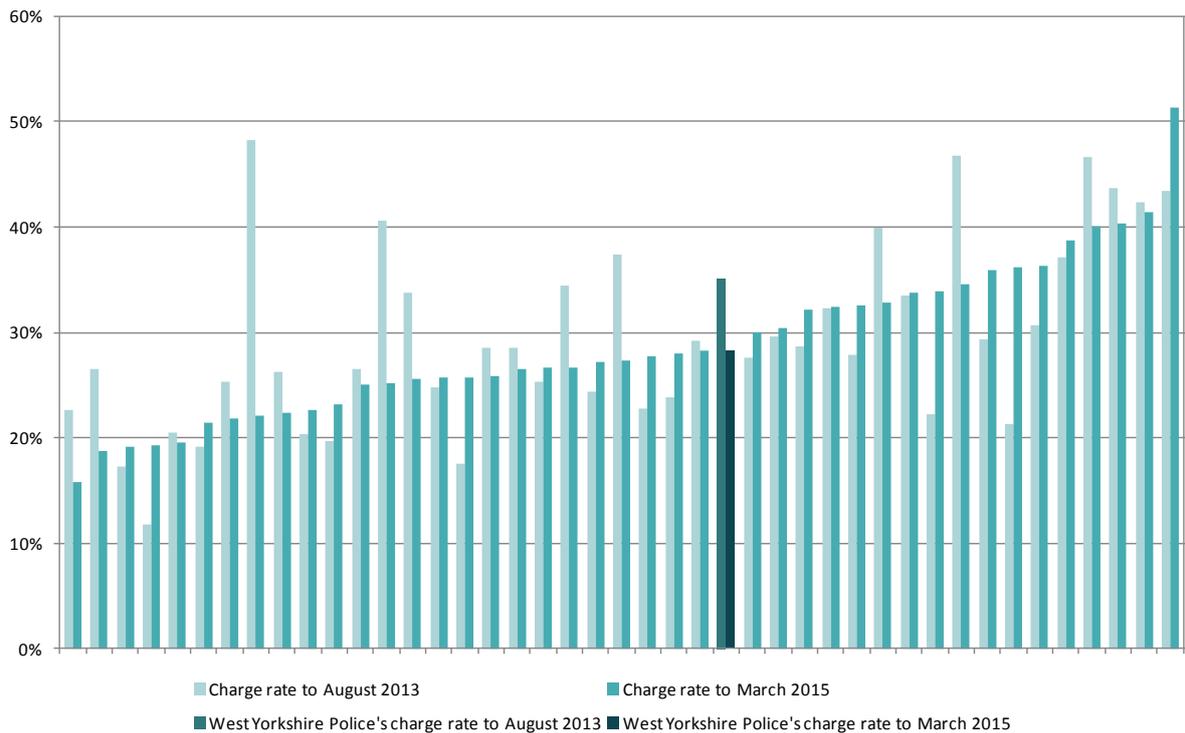
Figure 2: The number of arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes by force, for the 12 months to 31 March 2015



Source: HMIC data return

The force’s charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 28 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 35 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

We reviewed ten high-risk domestic abuse cases which in the main had good investigations and outcomes that were positive. However, there was a lack of recorded investigation plans and decisions within some of the case files. In each case there was a detailed handover pack from the attending officer to the specialist investigator and a risk assessment DASH form had been completed. Within the cases we found evidence that investigators were using a broad range of tactics to support and safeguard vulnerable victims such as domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs),¹⁵ non-molestation orders and pursuing recall to prison.

For instance, in one case a vulnerable repeat victim refused to make a formal complaint against the perpetrator and as a result the police issued a DVPN, which was supported by the court with the issue of a domestic violence prevention order (DVPO) preventing the perpetrator from contacting the victim. The perpetrator breached the order and committed further offences. The victim on this occasion was confident to support the prosecution and the offender was charged with a range of offences, including historic violence offences and remanded into custody.

¹⁵ DVPNS (domestic violence prevention notices) may be issued by an authorised police officer to prevent a suspected perpetrator from returning to a victim’s home and/or contacting the victim. Following the issue of the DVPN the police must apply to the magistrates for a domestic violence prevention order (DVPO). The DVPO will be granted for a period of up to 28 days.

HMIC also examined the force's use of new legal powers to protect victims. Domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) were introduced in England and Wales in 2014 to prevent a suspected offender from returning to a victim's home or contacting the victim. The force began using DVPOs in June 2014; it made 93 applications to magistrates' courts for their use, of which 87 were granted. Thirty-nine 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 45 percent compared with the England and Wales rate of 17 percent.¹⁶

Where the investigation led to the identification of a suspect, our review of the files showed that there was a commitment and consistent approach to arrest offenders at the earliest opportunity. Those arrested were dealt with promptly upon arrest, with an assessment of their needs and the risks to them. It was evident that officers used the full range of intelligence or evidential sources to progress the enquiry quickly, with effective handover on the investigation and with effective supervision.

During the inspection HMIC became aware of a recent change in process where the initial command and control call incident and deployment record may be closed for all new reports of a crime if there has not been any contact made with the victim for 24 hours of the original report. The crimes are allocated for investigation. Some standard and low-risk domestic abuse cases are converted from deployment to an appointment being made. This may result in safeguarding of victims being delayed and the effectiveness of investigations could be compromised. Reality checks in one control room found that staff felt this approach was too risky for domestic violence so they kept the call log open for contact and deployment to be progressed contrary to the new process. The force is aware of the implications and is addressing the issue.

The force supports victims of domestic abuse with the provision of independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs). The work done by IDVAs varies across each policing district. In some districts IDVAs and the police undertake joint visits to victims, while in other areas they do not. Instead they make contact with victims by telephone.

¹⁶ The England and Wales figure is based on data provided by 35 forces.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

West Yorkshire Police has a clear focus on protecting those who are most vulnerable and supporting victims. However, there are several areas where improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent across the force and that vulnerable people are kept safe. Given the scale of the challenge and the risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall, HMIC judges that the force requires improvement.

HMIC acknowledges that the force has committed significant effort and resource to offer a high-quality service to the public on dealing with vulnerability issues and supporting victims.

The force has strong and developing partnership arrangements for vulnerability and is working with other organisations in each of the five policing districts in a hub or multi-agency team.

The force has clear structures and processes to find missing and absent children, but there is an element of confusion around victims categorised as low risk. Across the force there remain some variances in who deals with victims of domestic abuse, depending on where the victims live. Not all victims in West Yorkshire are offered the opportunity to make a personal statement at the appropriate time.

The force has expanded its approach to investigating child sexual exploitation with its investment in dedicated resources and it is developing its understanding of historical incidents of child sexual exploitation.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its response to all incidents, including those relating to vulnerable people, by reviewing the process used to manage attendance at incidents over 24 hours old and take any action necessary.
- The force should improve its response to children who go missing, specifically in relation to staff understanding clearly their roles, responsibilities and the process to be adopted in cases assessed as low-risk or absent.
- The force should improve its response to victims of domestic abuse, specifically in relation to its allocation of medium and standard cases for investigation to ensure that consistent standards are applied across the force.
- The force should improve its compliance with the duties contained in the code of practice for victims of crime, specifically in relation to victim personal statements.