

# PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of Wiltshire Police



December 2015

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ISBN: 978-1-911194-55-2

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## Vulnerability in numbers



### Calls for assistance

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

Wiltshire Police

England and Wales

**48**

**350**

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

Wiltshire Police

England and Wales

**7.5**

**15.8**



### Crime

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

Wiltshire Police

England and Wales

**45.7**

**61.6**

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

Wiltshire Police

England and Wales

**-2.7%**

**+2.2%**

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

Wiltshire Police

England and Wales

**7.9%**

**10.7%**

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

Wiltshire Police

England and Wales

**11.5%**

**10.0%**

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

Wiltshire Police

England and Wales

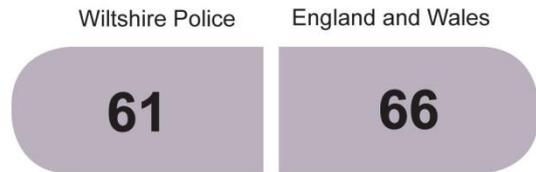
**+12.5%**

**+20.8%**



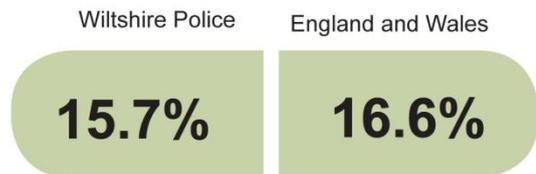
## Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

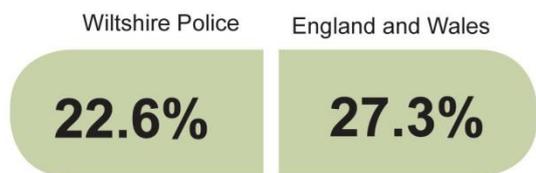


## Charge rate

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

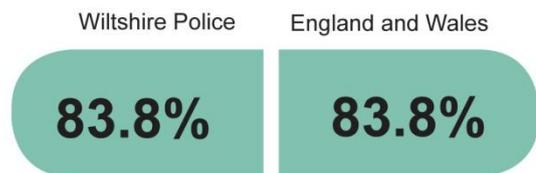


Domestic abuse charge rate as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015



## 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 Wiltshire Police.

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

## Summary



**Requires improvement**

Wiltshire Police generally provides a good service in identifying vulnerable people and responds well to them, so the public can be confident that many victims are well supported. However, there are several areas where improvement is needed to ensure that the service is consistent and vulnerable people, particularly children who go missing, are kept safe. Given the scale of the challenge in this area and risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall the force requires improvement.

HMIC acknowledges that Wiltshire Police has committed significant effort and resource to offer a high-quality service to the public. It strives to prioritise resources on the basis of threat, risk and harm. Force policies and processes show an emphasis on identifying those who are vulnerable and assessing levels of risk correctly. The force meeting structure assists with the prioritisation of resources to areas of risk and vulnerability. We also found clearly defined governance for safeguarding and specialist investigations.

The force has made its response to child sexual exploitation a priority and has invested resources into a dedicated child sexual exploitation team. The establishment of dedicated co-ordinators for domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation, together with the introduction of information-sharing meetings for both again demonstrates the force's prioritisation of vulnerable people.

We found evidence of good processes and behaviours in the force control room in identifying and responding to vulnerable victims. We were reassured that vulnerable callers to police buildings would also be readily identified.

The force is taking the initiative and providing vulnerability-based training to frontline staff. Partnership working is effective, including within the multi-agency safeguarding hub. High-risk domestic abuse cases are typically managed by specialist staff. We were reassured that specialist staff have manageable workloads and that they are well supported by supervisors. We found evidence of the thorough and timely completion of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment risk assessments, and of investigative and safeguarding plans.

HMIC is concerned about Wiltshire's inappropriate grading of risk for some missing and absent children. We are also concerned that the investigation and safeguarding of missing and absent children is not sufficiently prioritised.

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

Wiltshire Police strives to prioritise resources on the basis of threat, risk and harm. Protecting the most vulnerable in society is one of four priorities in the Wiltshire police and crime commissioner's police and crime plan for 2015-2017. A number of developments are in place giving an increased emphasis on identifying those who are vulnerable and to assessing levels of risk correctly.

The force's appointment of an additional assistant chief constable (ACC) with command responsibility for vulnerable people is one example of the force increasing its focus and priority on vulnerability. The recently-introduced public protection development board (soon to become the vulnerability board), formed by the recently-appointed ACC, provides Wiltshire with opportunities for improved strategic leadership and co-ordination of services to support vulnerable people across all business areas. The force is currently making progress towards an overarching vulnerability strategy which will cover all the main areas, including domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and missing and absent people.

Overall direction is provided through the force's strategic assessment and the control strategy,<sup>1</sup> both of which have a focus on domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and missing and absent people. Problem profiles<sup>2</sup> for domestic abuse, missing and absent people and child sexual exploitation also contribute to force direction and control. A partnership profile is also in existence which Wiltshire leads on, and draws on information across all relevant partner agencies.

### **Identifying those who are vulnerable**

Wiltshire Police is good at identifying vulnerable people. We found good practice within the force control room. The force expects staff to concentrate on vulnerable people when responding to calls from the public.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> A problem profile is intended to provide the force with 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.

The force's online command and control IT system automatically directs call-handlers to a prescribed question script when calls about identified vulnerable people categories are received. The questions are designed to elicit important information on risk and vulnerability. Calls in relation to domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and missing and absent people are included in the specified categories.

Vulnerability-based incidents can only be closed by supervisors within the control room once they are satisfied that all necessary actions have been undertaken and that the force vulnerability form (known as the PPD/1) has been completed properly. This provides an extra layer of scrutiny to ensure that the force responds appropriately to vulnerable callers.

Forces define vulnerability in different ways. The majority of forces use either the definition from the government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime<sup>3</sup> or that referred to in ACPO guidance.<sup>4</sup> Nine forces use their own definition or a combination of these definitions.

Wiltshire 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.”

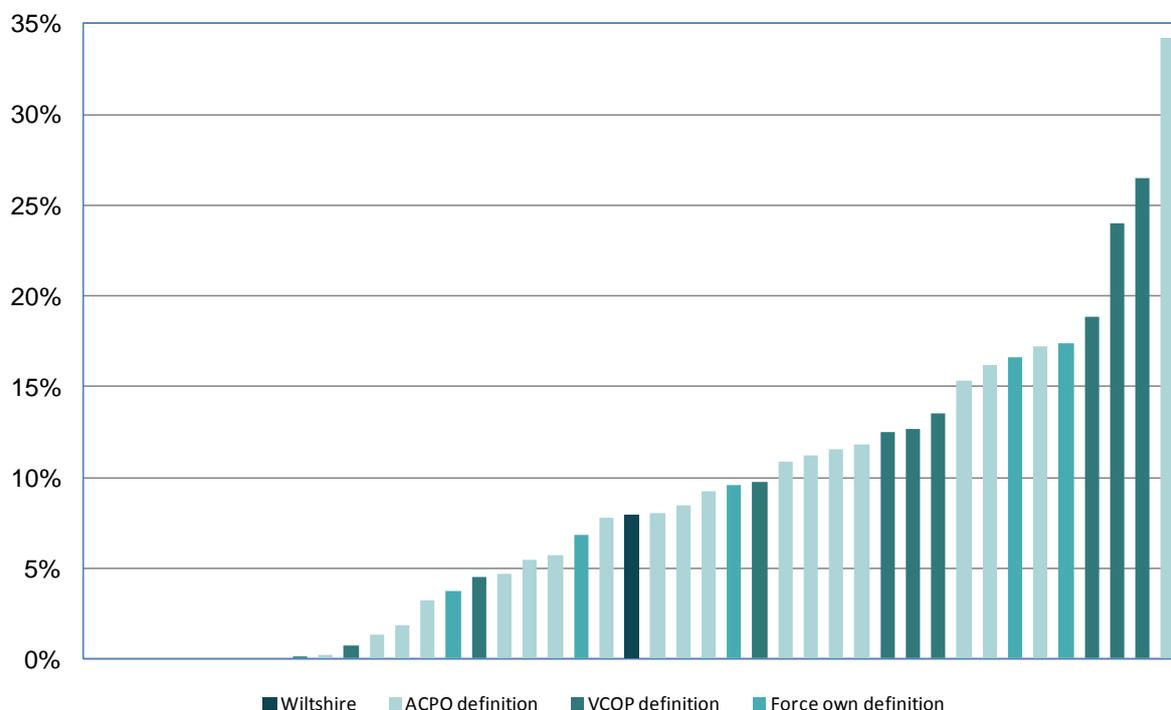
The proportion of crime recorded which involves a vulnerable victim varies considerably between forces, from 0.03 percent to 34.3 percent. For the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 7.9 percent of all recorded crimes in Wiltshire Police were identified as involving a vulnerable victim. Eight forces were unable to provide this data at the time of data collection. There is no standard way in which forces are required to record whether a victim is vulnerable on crime recording systems and forces do this differently.

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<sup>3</sup> *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](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254459/code-of-practice-victims-of-crime.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> 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/](http://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**

We reviewed a sample of calls during the inspection. We were impressed with the calm and reassuring communication style evident in the calls reviewed. It was clear that the call-handlers readily and routinely use the question scripts. It was similarly clear that vulnerability and risk is properly identified and that consideration is given to initial safeguarding.<sup>5</sup>

We found that enquiry desk staff have received training on risk and vulnerable people but training levels are inconsistent. Staff are focused on vulnerability, particularly regarding domestic abuse and missing and absent people. They regularly use call scripts designed to identify the nature of a victim’s vulnerability for persons attending police buildings, which means that the vulnerability of personal callers to stations should be identified consistently compared to those making telephone contact.

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

## **Assessing levels of risk and need**

While the force uses a number of methods to record the repeat status of a caller on force information systems, there is no provision to automatically identify repeat callers, for example if a call is made from a public venue. Call-handler scripts do not specify a question on repeat status. This means there may be a risk that some repeat victims might not be identified at the first point of contact.

Control room supervisors are expected to review regularly recordings of calls made by staff under their responsibility. However, there is no set regime regarding the number or type of calls to be reviewed. Performance and quality checking is also undertaken by a dedicated assessment and development team (ADT). Staff in the ADT undertake regularly a prescribed number of call reviews with particular focus on vulnerable people. This provides additional opportunities to ensure that callers are receiving a timely and appropriate response.

The intelligence development team (IDT) operates on a 24/7 basis within the control room and provide an extra stage of review and assessment of risk and vulnerability. This provides opportunities for enhanced research of force and partner information systems to understand better the risk, threat and harm, and to provide attending operational officers with a full history. We observed a live example of IDT intervention which led to the enhanced prioritisation of resources in relation to a potentially vulnerable person.

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

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

The force gives a clear priority to the management of child sexual exploitation. It is managing all child sexual exploitation activity and communication through its force brand Gemstone. A child sexual exploitation team has recently been introduced to assist in tackling this emerging threat.

The force's response to and understanding of domestic abuse is developing, as is its response to and understanding of children who are missing and absent.

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 has led to the very positive step of the creation of several new teams and structures. An additional assistant chief constable (ACC) with command responsibility for vulnerable people has been appointed.

In addition a domestic abuse co-ordinator has been funded with the introduction of a daily domestic abuse conference call (DACC), which involves the main safeguarding partners and provides daily opportunities to share important information on potentially vulnerable victims.

A dedicated co-ordinator for child sexual exploitation. has an important role in intelligence assessment and information-sharing with staff and partners. Research on child sexual exploitation is informed by relevant tags being placed on the force's online command and control system. However, many logs are not properly tagged which frustrates and prolongs this research.

Vulnerability-based training for control room and operational staff has been provided. Examples include classroom sessions and partner agency presentations for control room staff. A series of training initiatives have been provided across the force including training days, chief officer messages and the completion of online vulnerability training. Many operational staff we spoke to during the inspection confirmed that vulnerability-based training had been prioritised and readily talked about elements of training they had received.

## **How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?<sup>6</sup>**

### **Response officers**

Vulnerable people are a priority for the force and is moving away from statistical target-driven performance with greater focus on threat, risk and harm. Staff we spoke to during the inspection were positive about this change of culture for the force.

HMIC spoke to a wide selection of operational officers and staff during the inspection. We were reassured that staff had a clear focus on vulnerable people. We also identified examples where staff had taken the initiative about investigation and safeguarding for potentially vulnerable victims, including domestic abuse, child protection and missing and absent people.

When officers respond to an incident they are expected to fill in the force vulnerability form, the PPD/1. This has been developed to record all areas of vulnerability, including domestic abuse and child protection. The implementation of a single form to record all concerns and associated safeguarding measures provides opportunities for enhanced detail and consistency.

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

Operational staff are well-versed in the purpose of the PPD/1 form and we found examples where the form had been effectively used in bringing more attention to vulnerability concerns and in securing extra investigative and safeguarding support.

The domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH)<sup>7</sup> risk assessment matrix is contained within the PPD/1 form. Force policy states that a formal DASH risk assessment should be recorded for every domestic abuse incident. During the inspection we found that operational staff are aware of the policy and that they comply with it readily.

### **Supervision of the response to vulnerable victims**

The force daily management meeting conference call, chaired at superintendent level, is structured with an emphasis on vulnerable people. The meeting is informed through an online force portal which is automatically updated from a range of local information and intelligence systems. Domestic abuse and missing and absent are agenda items as is vulnerable persons and child protection. We observed one meeting during the inspection. A number of missing and absent cases on the portal were discussed. The appropriateness of risk assessments and associated child sexual exploitation threats were considered during the meeting.

The daily child sexual exploitation conference call also provides opportunities to identify and manage potential vulnerable victims more effectively. We monitored one child sexual exploitation meeting during the inspection. It was clear that the risk and prioritisation of child sexual exploitation cases were receiving extra attention as a result of this initiative. However, the extent of decision-makers being held to account and actions being tracked was less clear. While the conference is currently internally focused, the force hopes to include relevant partner agencies in future meetings.

Force policy states that all DASH risk assessments should be reviewed by a supervisor prior to onward submission to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH); for high-risk cases this is done by an inspector. We found evidence of awareness of the policy and of compliance among supervisors. Operational staff were similarly aware of their responsibility to manage initial safeguarding arrangements and to maintain close contact with the victim throughout the initial course of an investigation.

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<sup>7</sup> 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](http://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 keep victims safe?<sup>8</sup>**

### **Investigation of crimes involving vulnerable people**

HMIC reviewed<sup>9</sup> a sample of case files, of which nine involved vulnerable people. Despite thorough investigations only a small number resulted in charges being brought, mainly because uncooperative victims did not support the proceedings or because of a lack of evidence. We found that the force has a clear process for allocating and investigating crime and that, in the main, staff are identified and follow-up all investigative opportunities in a timely fashion. The early and appropriate allocation and use of specialist officers to investigate offences properly is the norm.

Domestic abuse is clearly prioritised with a dedicated domestic abuse investigation team (DAIT), based across the three operational hubs. However, a number of DAIT officers are not accredited investigators and some have received no specific training in handling domestic abuse. HMIC acknowledges the force's commitment to increase the numbers of accredited staff over the short to medium term.

DAIT staff provide daily cover through to the early evening during which time they are responsible for investigation and safeguarding of all high-risk domestic abuse cases. Local crime teams are expected to cover the hours where DAIT teams are unavailable. We found that this arrangement was largely being complied with across the force area and that DAIT staff carried manageable case loads. However, we found notably more demand on specialist staff based in the Swindon area. Local crime teams typically take responsibility for medium-risk cases with DAIT staff expected to manage safeguarding arrangements. Again we found evidence of good levels of compliance with this arrangement.

The force rarely allocates domestic abuse cases to non-investigative staff, and expects all high-risk cases to receive a follow-up visit from DAIT staff during which they review the initial DASH risk assessment. We are therefore reassured that domestic abuse victims are being provided with an effective and consistent service in Wiltshire.

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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 saw good practice in relation to the recording of investigation and safeguarding plans by specialist staff. We reviewed a small sample of child abuse and domestic abuse plans during our inspection, and were impressed with the timeliness of updates and the quality of recording, both in relation to investigation and safeguarding. Supervisory support was also evident in the cases we reviewed with regular and detailed entries being made on plans. We also noted regular entries regarding victim contact and updates.

### **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,<sup>10</sup> which they can use to explain how the crime has affected them. Victims should also be kept updated about the progress of their case.

HMIC found that staff have a sound understanding of victim needs, and that contact with victims was good. Supervisors do not close crime reports unless there is a record from the investigator regarding victims' code of practice compliance. HMIC found good levels of understanding of the purpose of victim personal statements among staff and evidence that they were being used in a timely way by investigators.

### **Working with partners**

The force works well with partners to protect vulnerable people. The force's multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) based at Trowbridge contains representatives from all key police and Wiltshire County partner agencies. By contrast, Swindon Borough partnership agencies are based in a family contact centre in the town rather than being physically located in the MASH.

The MASH is serviced by over 40 members of staff and provides a daily referral-and-review service. This represents a high level of provision and demonstrates the force's commitment to prioritising vulnerable people.

Partner agency representatives to whom we spoke during our inspection commented positively on the force's increased emphasis on prioritising risk and vulnerable people. Recent continuity in senior staff with responsibility for vulnerable people, and

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<sup>10</sup> 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.

the positive police support for the local children's safeguarding boards<sup>11</sup> and other initiatives designed to support vulnerable people also received favourable comment.

Partner representatives were similarly complimentary regarding the DACC initiative and the effectiveness of multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs).<sup>12</sup> They were particularly positive about the police chairing of the MARAC and the extent to which attending agencies are appropriately given tasks and held to account. Their feedback regarding the approach to victim care and victim personal statements was similarly positive. However, partner representatives also recommended greater assimilation of Swindon-based partner agencies into the MASH. There was a consensus that a move away from the current remote arrangements, with less emphasis on telephone consultation between the family contact centre and the MASH, would enable more effective information-sharing and a better service to vulnerable victims.

The MASH currently receives all PPD/1 forms including DASH risk assessments for initial review. We visited the MASH during the inspection and spoke to a selection of staff. At the time of our inspection, all such reviews are conducted in good time and there is no backlog. We were impressed by the constructive outlook of the MASH staff and we found evidence of a positive regime for victim care. Examples include the effectiveness of review, information assessment and sharing and an onus on the swift allocation of appropriate resources. We also noted effective practice to ensure appropriate follow-up on enquiries allocated to operational staff.

## **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.

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<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

## **Missing and absent children**

Wiltshire Police's response to missing and absent children is inconsistent and needs to improve.

The force's missing and absent system 'whiteboard' has some useful features, but the force acknowledges that it has many limitations and needs to be updated. A decision has been made to manage future cases through the force's main online information system. However, no dates for this change have been agreed and HMIC is concerned that its implementation may be continually delayed.

The introduction of two missing and absent co-ordinators, one for each local authority area, has provided the force with increased opportunities to improve effectiveness and consistency in the assessment and management of missing and absent enquiries. The co-ordinators conduct a daily review of 'whiteboard' entries and of force information systems. This review informs a variety of briefings and information summaries for police and partners.

The co-ordinators have a role in prompting and advising operational staff about outstanding enquires. We observed one real-time example of such an engagement through remote technology which demonstrated genuine commitment to the role. Recent extra funding has been granted in order to provide administrative support to the co-ordinators. This demonstrates further the force's commitment to managing this vulnerability area.

The force's missing and absent persons procedure document provides clear guidance and direction for staff. Staff spoken to during the inspection indicated an awareness of the risk attached to missing persons and a positive approach regarding priority and importance.

By contrast, we have concerns that some senior officers spoken to during the inspection were unable to summarise key aspects of force policy, for example the difference between definitions for missing and absent. These knowledge gaps could lead to inconsistency in ensuring appropriate priority for risk assessment, investigation and safeguarding.

We reviewed a small sample of missing cases during the inspection and found significant concerns in most of the cases examined. Our concerns related to the appropriateness of the initial assessment and risk grading, including one case where a suicide risk had been disclosed, complacent language regarding the history and status of the subject the timeliness and ownership of documented plans and actions, and the effectiveness of supervisory reviews.

## **Preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation**

This inspection has focused on actions and activities the force has taken to understand and identify the extent to which children are at risk of child sexual exploitation and the policies, practices and procedures it is putting in place to tackle this. It did not test the quality of how the force conducted these complex investigations with other agencies such as children's services as these issues are covered in HMIC's rolling programme of child protection inspections.

The force is prioritising clearly the management of child sexual exploitation. It is managing all child sexual exploitation activity and communication under its force brand Gemstone. This provides a consistent message and should assist in the continuing promotion of child sexual exploitation as a priority. A child sexual exploitation team has recently been introduced to assist in tackling this emerging threat which further represents the force commitment to prioritising child sexual exploitation. The team's role includes interview support, safeguarding and victim liaison, which will be co-located with multi agency partners.

The force has made a considerable effort to increase awareness and understanding among staff regarding child sexual exploitation and the associated risk to vulnerable people. Examples include email briefings and articles in the force magazine. HMIC found evidence of good levels of understanding among operational staff and supervisors regarding intelligence on child sexual exploitation and knowledge of the early signs to indicate risk.

The force now has a dedicated co-ordinator for child sexual exploitation. The co-ordinator has an important role in intelligence assessment and information-sharing with staff and partners. Research on child sexual exploitation is informed by relevant tags being placed on the force's online command and control system. However, many logs are not properly tagged which frustrates and prolongs this research.

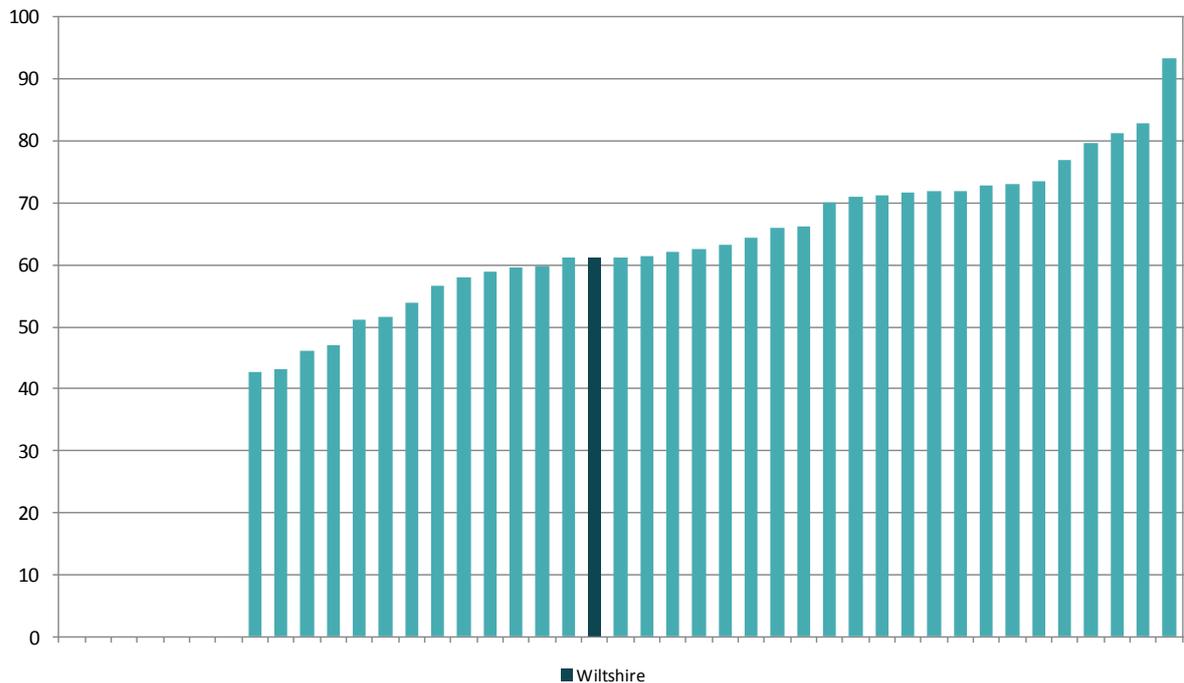
## **Domestic abuse**

The force expects operational staff to take positive action at the scene of domestic abuse incidents.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 12 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 12 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 Wiltshire made 61 arrests.

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

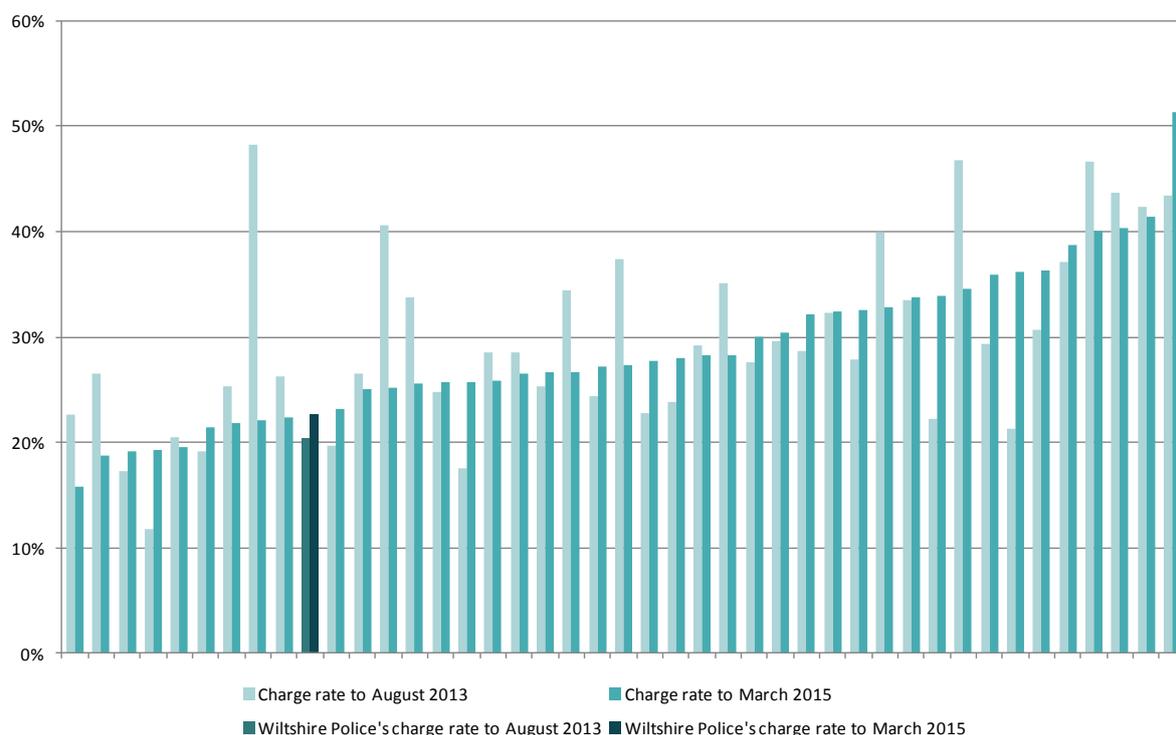


**Source: HMIC data return**

Staff we spoke to during the inspection expressed some frustration that body-worn video cameras or alternative technology is not currently provided to assist with evidence gathering. We were informed of the force’s commitment to introduce new mobile technology for operational staff in the near future. Despite the current lack of provision, we were made aware of examples of staff using personally-owned technology to obtain evidence. This could expose the force to criticism in respect of the integrity of data storage and potentially undermine prosecutions to the detriment of victims.

The force’s charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 23 percent, compared with 27 percent for England and Wales. This is an increase since the last HMIC domestic abuse inspection when the force rate was 20 percent for the 12 months to 31 August 2013, compared with 30 percent for England and Wales.

**Figure 3: Domestic abuse charge rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 compared to the 12 months to 31 August 2013.**



**Source: HMIC data return**

HMIC also examined the force's use of new legal powers to protect victims. Domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) were introduced in England and Wales in 2014 to prevent a suspected offender from returning to a victim's home or contacting the victim. As one of the pilot forces where the use of DVPOs was trialed, Wiltshire began using them in July 2011. The force was unable to provide data on how many applications for DVPOs have been made or granted or how many DVPOs have been breached.

The domestic abuse, stalking and harassment (DASH)<sup>13</sup> risk assessment matrix is contained within the PPD/1 form. Force policy states that a formal DASH risk assessment should be recorded for every domestic abuse incident. During the inspection we found that operational staff are aware of the policy and that they comply with it readily.

Supervisory guidance and intervention is provided to officers attending the scenes of domestic incidents. Evidence found during the inspection also indicated that supervisors were proactive in ensuring the timely review of DASH risk assessments and their onward transfer to the MASH. However, the transfer of DASH risk assessments to the MASH relies on manual submission and we found one example

<sup>13</sup> DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and honour based violence) is a widely-used tool which aims to assist the force to respond positively to incidents of domestic abuse, to assess risk and vulnerability, and to implement immediate safeguarding actions.

of a high-risk DASH form not being received in the MASH. As a result some domestic abuse cases may not be receiving timely and appropriate investigation and safeguarding.

We reviewed a small sample of DASH risk assessments during the inspection and found them to be detailed and comprehensive. Partner agency representatives to whom we spoke mostly confirmed continuing improvements in the quality and thoroughness of Wiltshire Police's DASH risk assessments and child protection referrals.

Independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) are available to domestic abuse victims through domestic abuse support services throughout Wiltshire. IDVA representatives spoken to during the inspection confirmed the force's increased focus on vulnerable people connected to domestic abuse. But they also urged the need for continued improvements to the quality of DASH risk assessments.

Specialist victim care outside of domestic abuse is provided by a victim and witness care initiative which provides a single point of contact for areas such as practical advice, case updates, criminal justice liaison and referral to partner support initiatives. The force has been running this since February 2015 and the significant police investment indicates the force's commitment to vulnerable victims.

## Summary of findings



**Requires improvement**

Wiltshire Police has committed significant effort and resource to offer a high-quality service to the public. It strives to prioritise resources on the basis of threat, risk and harm. Force policies and processes show an emphasis on identifying those who are vulnerable and assessing levels of risk correctly. The force meeting structure assists with the prioritisation of resources to areas of risk and vulnerable people.

The force has made the response to child sexual exploitation a priority and has invested resources into a dedicated child sexual exploitation team. The force's establishment of dedicated co-ordinators for domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation, together with the introduction of information sharing meetings for both demonstrates its prioritisation of vulnerable people.

We found evidence of good processes and behaviours in the force control room in identifying and responding to vulnerable victims. Vulnerable callers to police buildings are also readily identified.

Partnership working is effective, including within the multi-agency safeguarding hub. High-risk domestic abuse cases are typically managed by specialist staff. We were reassured that specialist staff have manageable workloads and that they are well-supported by supervisors.

HMIC is concerned, however, about the inappropriate grading of risk for some missing and absent children. We also have a concern about the priority given to the investigation and safeguarding of missing and absent children.

### **Causes of concern**

The force's response to missing and absent children is a cause of concern for HMIC. A review of missing and absent children cases revealed inappropriate initial assessments of risk with a lack of supervisory reviews, including a case where a risk of suicide had been disclosed. HMIC also has concerns in relation to the timeliness of investigations and the lack of clarity of plans and actions. In addition, we found inconsistent levels of understanding among senior officers in relation to key aspects of the force policy. These knowledge gaps could lead to inconsistency in ensuring appropriate priority for risk assessment, investigation and safeguarding.

### **Recommendation**

- To address this cause of concern HMIC recommends that the force should immediately take steps to improve its response to missing and absent children, specifically in relation to the initial risk assessment and its supervision, and the priority given to investigations and safeguarding activity.

### **Areas for improvement**

The force should improve its response to domestic abuse by ensuring that:

- officers and staff with the appropriate professional skills and experience investigate cases;
- it has robust processes for the submission of referrals to the MASH to enable timely and appropriate investigations and safeguarding;
- it reviews the use of DVPOs and DVPNs, as well as the system for recording and reviewing their use and effectiveness;
- it clarifies the force's policy on the use of photographic and video-recording equipment to obtain evidence of injuries and scenes; and
- it ensures that its storage and retention of images comply with requirements.