Evaluation of the National Child Protection Inspection programme on policing

Short research report for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Contents

Executive summary

This short report presents the main findings of an independent evaluation of the National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI) programme which is run by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), as a rolling programme for police forces across England and Wales.

This mixed-method evaluation explores the perceived impact of the NCPI programme on policing practices since 2014, as well as people's experiences of it.

The evaluation found that there is evidence of positive changes in line with the programme's logic, including in the areas of leadership, management and governance, the child's experience of the force, child-focused evidenced-based decision-making practices, treatment of children in police detention and the treatment of absent and missing children. These changes have been facilitated by strategic engagement and buy-in to the NCPI programme from senior leaders within the forces. This has influenced the acceptance of recommendations and prioritisation of child protection work which has in turn supported investment in resources designed to safeguard children across the forces.

The NCPI approach was considered engaging and comprehensive, and a greater sense of collaboration with forces was highlighted since the changes to the inspection approach in 2017.[1] There were however some notable barriers that were perceived to limit the ability of the NCPI programme to achieve longer-term change. These included a force's internal working practices and systems; the working practices of partner agencies; the wider inspection regime; and perceptions of findings and recommendations in NCPI reports.

A number of recommendations are detailed in the report to guide the development of the NCPI methodology in the future, to ensure it continues to support and collaborate with forces in the most effective way. Key recommendations include:

- HMICFRS could better publicise the aims and benefits of the inspection programme across staff grades and police units and be transparent about the range and purpose of data collection methods. They should work with forces to ensure information is cascaded in a clear and accessible way, to support buy-in and prioritisation of safeguarding work.

- Better sharing of good practice would increase opportunities for forces to learn from each other, which could be usefully facilitated by HMICFRS, including through, for example, the 'learning events'.

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[1] An overview of changes to the inspection methodology is outlined in chapter 1 in the full report.

- Consideration should be given to the timing of inspection work and the potential for coordinating around other programmes (such as PEEL[2]), as the amount of work involved in supporting inspection activities was reported as significant.

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[2] PEEL is the programme HMICFRS uses to draw together evidence from its annual all-force inspections. PEEL stands for the police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy programme.

Short report

This short report presents the main findings of an independent evaluation of the National Child Protection Inspection programme (NCPI). For more detail about the inspection background and methodology, and the research methodology and findings, please see the full research report.

Introduction and background

Aims of the NCPI programme

The overall aim of the NCPI programme is to improve the experiences of and outcomes for children and young people who come into contact with the police when there are concerns about their safety or well-being. The specific objectives of the inspection programme are to:

- assess how effectively police forces safeguard children at risk;

- make recommendations to police forces for improving child protection practices;

- highlight good practice in child protection work; and

- drive improvement in police forces' child protection practices.

The programme's methodology builds on key strengths of earlier multi-agency inspections. It uses multiple modes of assessment to assess the child's experiences of and interactions with the police across different stages of their journey through the system.

Aims of the evaluation

HMICFRS commissioned the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) to carry out a mixed-method evaluation to explore the perceived impact of the NCPI programme on policing practices since 2014, with a focus on whether there is evidence:

- that inspected forces' child protection policies have improved as a result of the inspection regime;

- that through greater involvement and engagement with HMICFRS inspection activity forces made more changes to their child protection policies and practices;

- that the programme has had an impact on the policies and practices of the forces that have not yet been inspected; and

- of unintended consequences of the NCPI programme, whether positive or negative.

Findings have implications for supporting future development of the NCPI, as well as ongoing evaluation of the programme.

Evaluation methodology

Multiple methods of data collection were used to capture evidence on the perceived impact of the NCPI programme, which included the development of the programme's logic model, a document review, an online survey and qualitative case studies, as outlined in figure 1.

Figure 1: Evaluation methodology
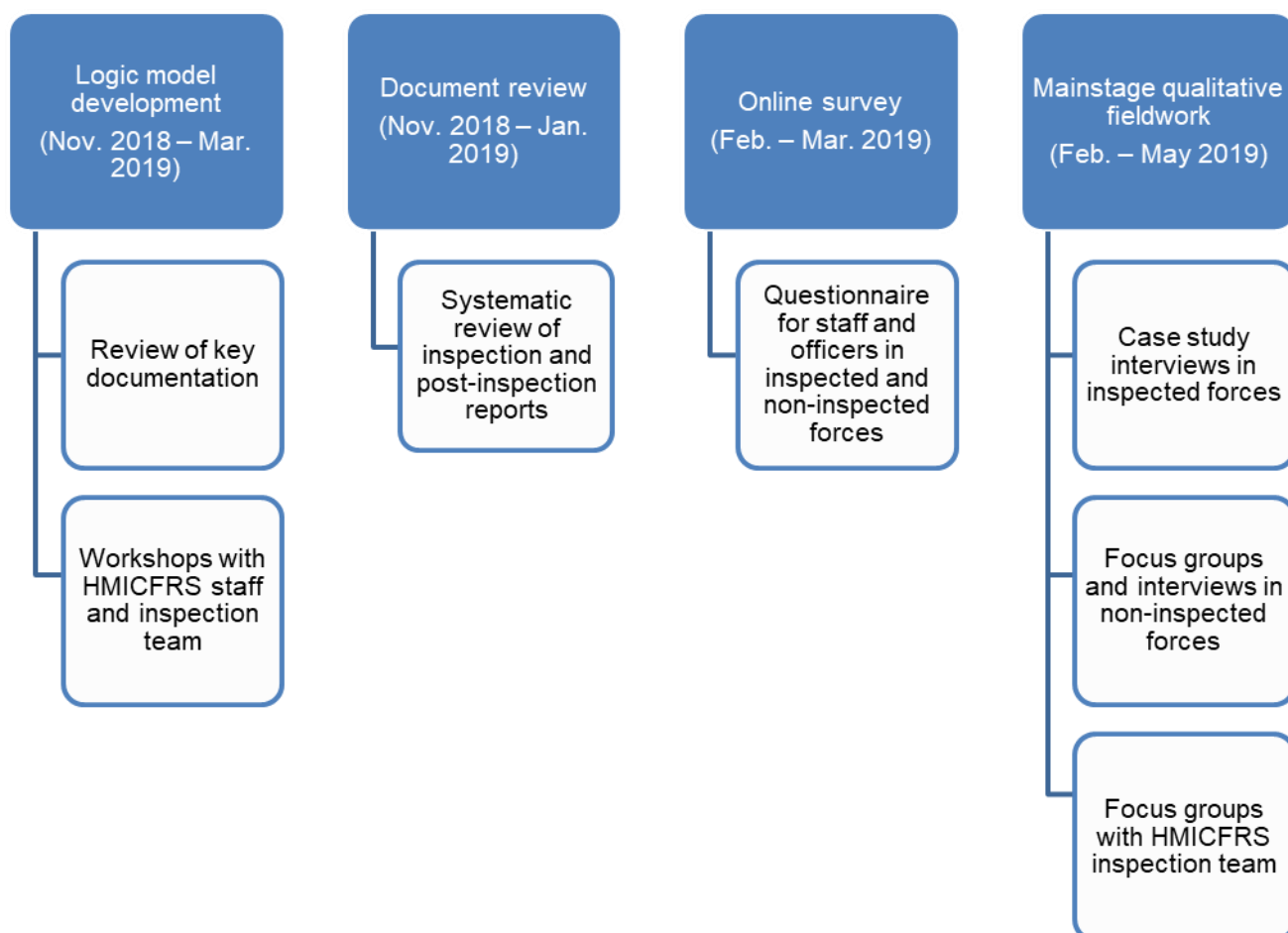
A brief overview of the methods is given below.

- **Logic model development**. The final model developed by the research team sets out a logical description of how and why the inspection activities will lead to intended benefits (see appendix B in the full report). Alongside this, an indicator matrix was developed to map associated outcome measures and gaps. Together, the model and matrix can be used to communicate the aims and logic of the NCPI programme, support programme design and planning, and measure the progress and success of the NCPI programme going forward. Progress towards outcomes in the model, drawing on data collected for the evaluation, is highlighted throughout the report.

- **Document review**. Inspection and post-inspection reports from 24 police forces were systematically reviewed to extract information on impacts from the NCPI programme and identify improvements across inspection assessment criteria.

- **Qualitative fieldwork**. Depth interviews were conducted with 37 individuals from or working with 10 inspected police forces. Participants included force child protection / abuse leads, local authority / multi-agency assessment leads, business improvement leads, members of the local safeguarding partnerships, chairs or Directors of Children's Services (DCS) and custody leads. We also carried out a focus group and interviews with two uninspected forces and a focus group with HMICFRS inspectors.

- **Online survey**. The survey was aimed at staff and officers working in police units where officers and staff were most likely to come into contact with children, such as neighbourhood policing, custody, and child protection units across police force areas. It gathered views on respondents' backgrounds, their awareness of the NCPI programme, their views on its impact, and their forces' approaches to child protection. HMICFRS invited all 43 police forces to participate in the survey. Thirty four forces responded to the request and distributed the online survey within their forces. A total of 856 participants completed the survey. Twenty five police forces had more than one survey response – of these 16 were inspected forces and 9 were uninspected forces. Survey findings are provided throughout the report and in a separate chapter detailing police staff and officers' views on and approaches to child protection at appendix C of the full report.

Interpreting the evaluation findings

It is noted in the report where findings relate to either the survey, qualitative fieldwork or document review. Across the chapters, qualitative and quantitative findings are reported on concurrently to provide a detailed understanding of key issues and themes. Two points are important to consider when interpreting these findings:

- The survey data provides useful context and background information about where forces felt they were in relation to key outcomes in the police force pathway.[3] However, the survey sample was self-selecting and therefore not representative of the wider police force population. In the quantitative analysis that follows, the data has been statistically tested to identify differences that are statistically significant at the 95% level and these differences are highlighted in the report unless otherwise stated.[4] However, it should be noted that due to the sampling methodology any differences identified between subgroups (e.g. inspected and uninspected forces) may not be directly related to the NCPI programme but instead to a range of other factors.

- In relation to the qualitative data, the number of people who hold a particular view is not reported as it offers no indication of the extent to which these views are

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[3] Comparisons between inspected and uninspected forces have only been noted where there are statistically significant differences in the data.

[4] If a difference or change is 'statistically significant' at 95%, we can be 95% confident that these are real differences between different respondent groups' views, rather than differences relating to chance.

held in the wider population.[5] The report distinguishes between different types of participants where this helps to illuminate findings and would not breach anonymity.

Key findings

Findings reported here explore evidence and progress towards key outcomes in the NCPI programme logic model. An overview table of key impact findings is included at the end of this short report.

Awareness and understanding of the NCPI programme

Figure 2: Overview of outcome pathways
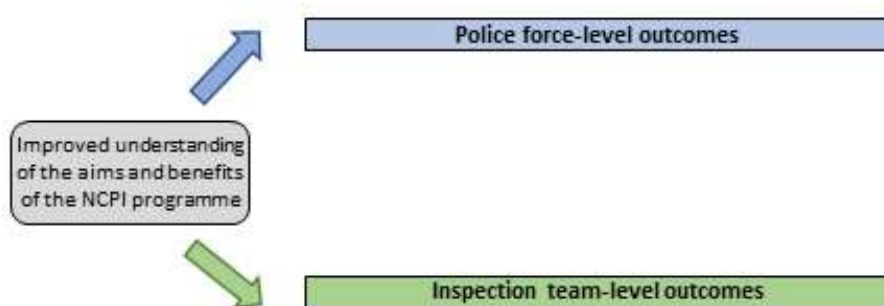
Understanding of the aims and benefits of the NCPI programme is the first outcome in the logic model and considered to facilitate positive change in how forces safeguard children and prioritise child protection work. The assumption is that with greater awareness and understanding of the NCPI's goals and better dissemination, police forces will engage with the programme more, leading to changes to child protection practices that are aligned with the programme's aims. These are therefore important outcomes for HMICFRS to measure and monitor.

Findings from this evaluation suggest that understanding and awareness is higher within inspected forces than non- inspected forces; higher among senior staff than among frontline staff; and higher among those directly involved in child protection work than among those working in areas with a broader remit (e.g. custody units). This could be because these roles tended to be more involved in other inspections, which may affect their ability to disentangle specific inspection activity.

This suggests that while HMICFRS may be helping to increase awareness of the NCPI programme among strategic staff and those more heavily involved in the inspections, more could be done to raise awareness of the inspection programme among all police staff and partners through different channels. For example, through

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[5] Any numerical inference is likely to be misleading or inaccurate as qualitative samples are not designed for this purpose, but instead to capture range and diversity of views and experiences.

the current learning events run by HMICFRS, supporting key shared evidence and dissemination outcomes (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Shared evidence and dissemination outcomes
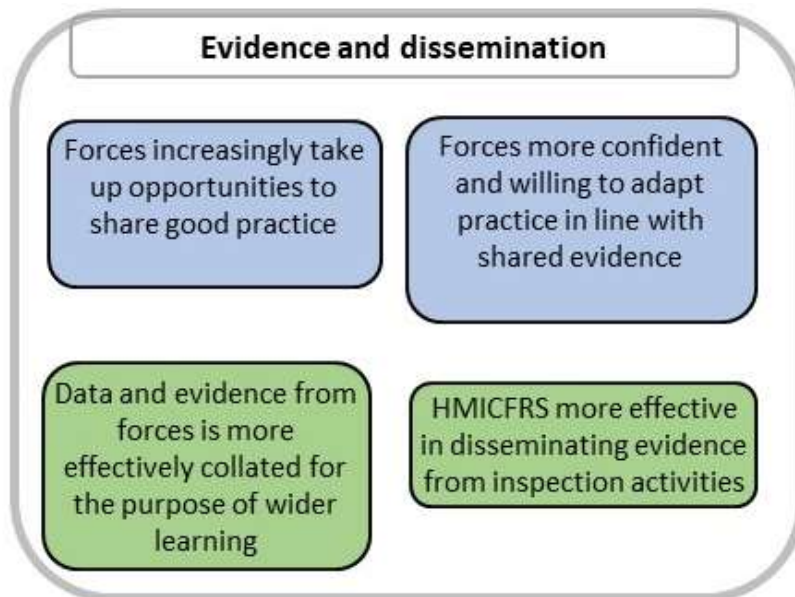
Learning events are one way in which HMICFRS supports dissemination. They are held by the NCPI team to disseminate best practice and discuss common areas of challenge in child protection policy and practice. They are typically communicated via the National Police Chiefs' Council and through HMICFRS's national stakeholder newsletters.

Awareness of learning events was low among all participants. However, there was interest in attending the events, and it was felt that these may be an effective way to share common challenges and best practice. The inspection team also highlighted that more work could be done to promote learning events and inspection findings, including through local meetings and networks and suggested that this sort of activity could be built into the NCPI programme.

Perceived impacts of the NCPI

The overarching goal of the NCPI programme is 'improved outcomes for children'. The logic model outlines the pathway of change that needs to occur for a child-centred approach to become embedded within police forces, and to facilitate effective partnership working with key stakeholders (see figure 4). This includes a force having the relevant training, systems and processes in place to enable staff and officers to:

- feel confident about making child-centred decisions;
- have a better understanding of individuals who pose a risk to children; and
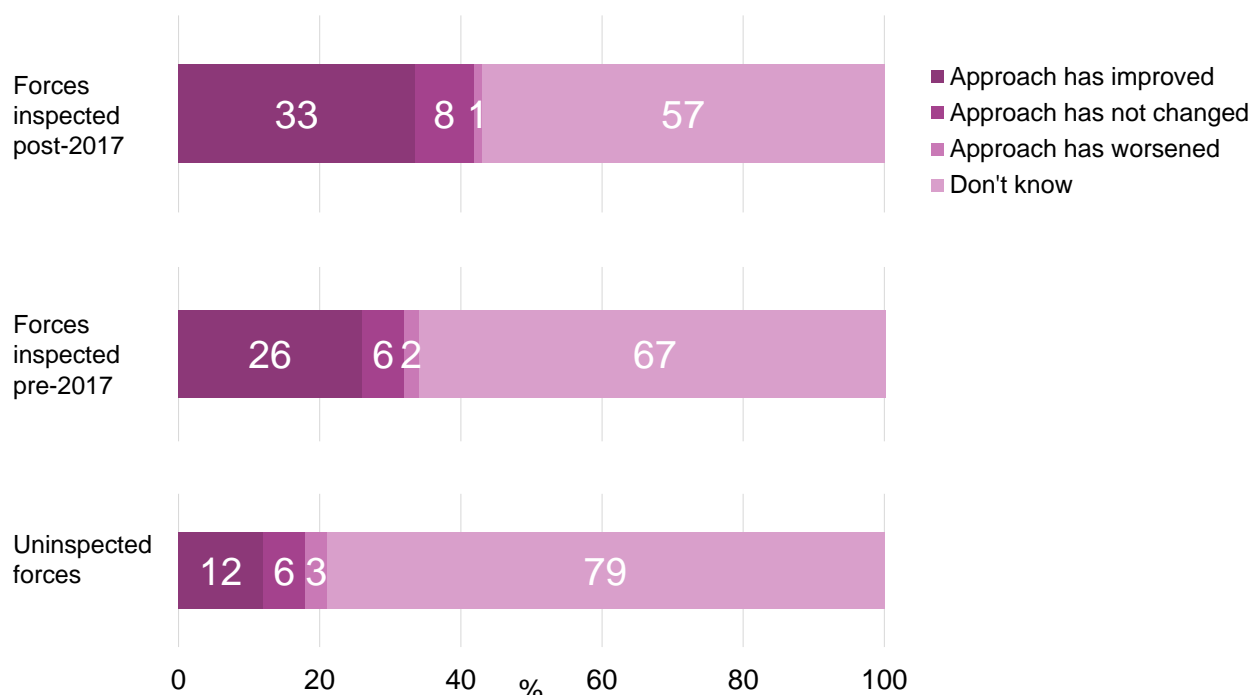
- be better able to identify children and families in need and provide the necessary support and signposting to partner agencies.

Figure 4: Police force-level pathway
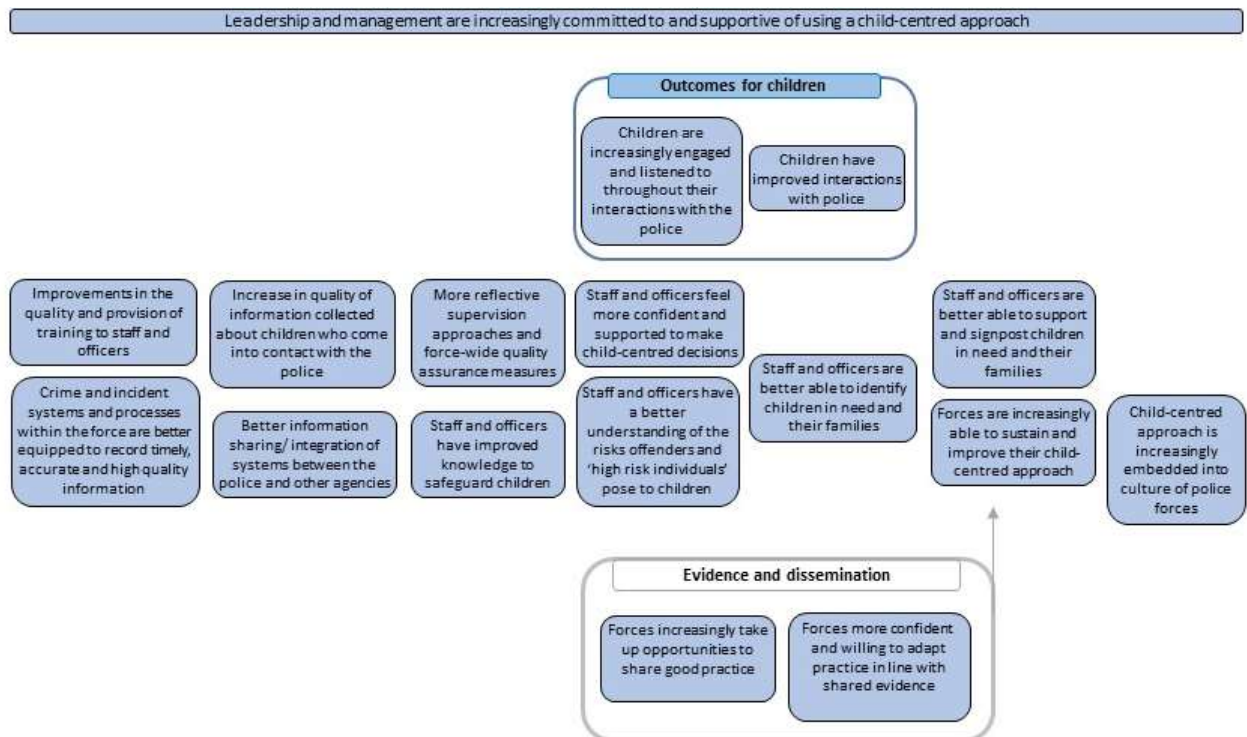
The survey showed that around one quarter (23%) of respondents felt that their force's approach to child protection had improved because of the NCPI programme. The proportion of respondents that reported a positive impact on child protection as a result of the NCPI programme was higher among inspected forces at 30%, compared with 12% of uninspected forces, and those inspected more recently (though improvements may be reported in forces that have not had an inspection yet due to the broader influence of the programme).

Figure 5: Impact respondents think the NCPI programme has had overall on their forces' approach to child protection

Legend:
- Approach has improved
- Approach has not changed
- Approach has worsened
- Don't know

Forces inspected post-2017: 33, 8, 1, 57
Forces inspected pre-2017: 26, 6, 2, 67
Uninspected forces: 12, 6, 3, 79

X-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100 (%)

Base: 834 respondents

Individuals from inspected forces and the inspection team believed that the NCPI programme helped to embed change in forces' approaches to child protection, supporting progress in key areas such as understanding of child protection and safeguarding issues, information sharing and partnership work.

Evidence of impact was also identified across specific inspection criteria. For example, in relation to the child's experience of the force, three areas of change were identified, which included:

- **Internal awareness campaigns and training** for officers and staff to improve knowledge and understanding around child protection. This aligns with the survey data showing a significant relationship between a force's inspection status and the recency of training related to identifying children at risk and listening and speaking to children. The findings highlighted however that improvements could be made to ensure training was of consistent high quality.

- An **improved approach to identifying children, assessing risks and making onward referrals**. In line with this, survey findings showed respondents in inspected forces were more likely to agree that they could access information in a timely manner (61% compared with 49% who agreed in uninspected forces) and that information captured was of a high quality and sufficient level of detail (41% agreed, compared with 34% in uninspected forces).

- **Improved awareness and approaches around capturing detailed information about the child and the 'child's voice'**. There was a small difference between inspected forces, 66% of whom agreed that their force had a culture of listening to children as compared with 60% of those in uninspected forces. This indicates that some improvement might be felt from strategies

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implemented within forces following inspection activity. However, more could be done to ensure HMICFRS continues to support improvements in this area.

Facilitators and barriers to change

Underpinning these changes were a range of facilitators which linked together and closely followed the sequence of outcomes detailed in the logic model. The first condition perceived to be important was strategic engagement and buy-in with the NCPI programme from senior leaders within the forces, which influenced the acceptance of recommendations by operational and frontline staff across a force and prioritisation of child protection work. This in turn was perceived to support investment in resources designed to safeguard children across the force. Finally the increased sense of collaboration between HMICFRS and inspected forces since 2017 (when the NCPI methodology changed) was perceived to be important to driving sustainable improvements (as outlined in the section below).

However, a range of barriers were also identified that could limit the ability of the NCPI programme to achieve longer-term change. These included a force's internal working practices and systems; the working practices of partner agencies; the wider inspection regime; and confidence in the inspection findings. The survey also indicated that changes linked to the NCPI programme were perhaps not as strongly felt by those working in frontline roles, and that those working in custody teams were less likely to report positive views than those working in other areas. This suggests that more work could usefully be done across forces to ensure impacts of any changes made regarding child protection are communicated and experienced widely.

Unintended consequences

Unintended consequences of the NCPI programme were also reported. These could facilitate or impede child protection work and should be considered as the programme develops and adapts to work with more forces over time. Positive unintended consequences included:

- Some forces had reviewed their practice (drawing on the inspection methodology) to support ongoing monitoring and improvement across a range of areas, including those not identified through the inspection.

- A better awareness and understanding of how to work with other vulnerable groups and perpetrators. For example, one force reported how the NCPI programme had prompted them to reassess and broaden practices for assessing domestic violence perpetrators.

- Among uninspected forces, the NCPI was thought to have raised the profile of child protection.

Individuals from inspected forces had more mixed views on a number of other unintended consequences, including:

- Changing perceptions of the force across internal staff, external partners and the wider public, which could be both positive and negative in nature.

- Reviewing the allocation and use of resources to support child protection and safeguarding work which was perceived by some to be positive, but others as diverting resources away from other important areas.

Lastly, among forces yet to be inspected there was limited evidence of impact that could be directly linked to the NCPI programme, which may be expected given the lack of direct engagement these forces are likely to have had with the inspection programme. However, staff recognised the role of the NCPI programme in promoting good practice across forces and sharing lessons learned. This suggests that there may be opportunity for evidence from forces to be more effectively collated and shared for the purposes of wider learning (which is also a key outcome in the inspection pathway (see figure 6 below).

Experiences of the NCPI

The NCPI programme's logic model assumes that improvements in the inspection approach should lead to improvements in the way forces work to protect children. More comprehensive and tailored inspection work should have a direct impact on how forces implement and sustain a child-centred approach, ultimately leading to better outcomes for children, as set out in the inspection team pathway (figure 6).

Figure 6: Inspection team-level pathway
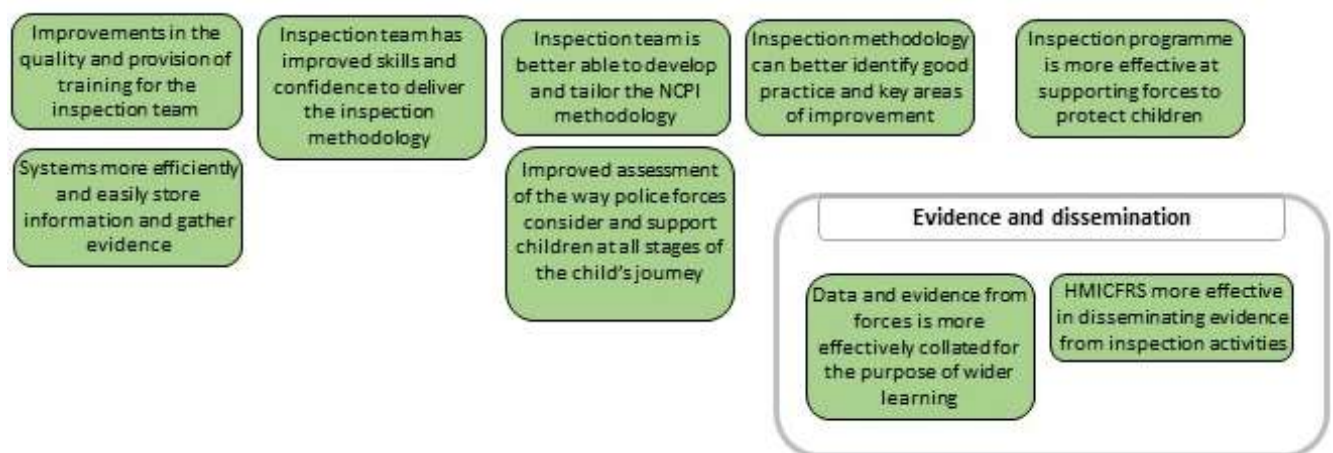
Positive and negative views on the inspection approach and methodology were often shared alongside each other. The evidence highlights a broadly consistent positive view from across the participants included in the evaluation. More negative views are reported with greater nuance, reflecting specific issues or challenges that participants had encountered. Several other considerations are helpful to bear in mind when reading this section:

- Less positive views were only shared by some forces and individuals within these forces.
- It was clear that these views sometimes related to specific experiences which may have been influenced by other factors external to the inspection programme.

- Less positive views seemed to be shared more by individuals in roles that were external to the force, including local authority safeguarding partners. This highlights that more could be done to raise wider awareness and buy-in with partner agencies of the inspection programme to support further positive outcomes across the logic model.

Views on the inspection approach

The NCPI programme was perceived to be different from other inspections and individuals from inspected forces were surprised by the scope of inspection activities. The NCPI approach was considered engaging and comprehensive, and a greater sense of collaboration with forces was highlighted since the changes to the inspection approach in 2017.[6] Four key elements of the NCPI approach were thought to support effective assessment of force systems and performance in relation to child protection. They included:

- **Multiple data collection methods**, which included case audits and self-assessment, observations and reality testing, and qualitative interviews and focus groups with a range of participants. The mixed-method approach, element of self-assessment (unique to the NCPI programme) and inclusion of a broad range of perspectives was important in gathering an appropriate level of detail across police force areas. This helped to develop a rounded understanding of how the force perceived its child protection work, which could be triangulated and compared with case review evidence.

- **Flexible qualitative approach**, which involved examination of detailed qualitative data was thought to enable the inspection team to explore and understand the complexities of forces' work. This was perceived to facilitate a more robust and meaningful assessment than might be possible through the monitoring of quantitative data alone.

- **Two-stage design of the methodology** (again unique to the NCPI programme), with a full inspection and subsequent revisit or review process, was thought to be effective in supporting ongoing improvement, monitoring how changes have been addressed and sustaining momentum. Follow-up activity was thought to be helpful because forces knew what to expect and it allowed them demonstrate positive change which could boost morale. However, some participants felt the narrow scope of the follow-ups represented missed opportunities to fully understand changes forces had implemented.

- **General collaborative approach**. Participants valued the inspection team's willingness to engage collaboratively with the force and felt that the supportive approach enabled forces to discuss issues and challenges comfortably. The increased sense of collaboration between HMICFRS and inspected forces since 2017 (when the NCPI methodology changed) was perceived to be important in driving sustainable improvements. However, in contrast, some felt the inspection team was somewhat guarded about how they reached conclusions or reluctant to share detailed feedback with the force.

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[6] An overview of changes to the inspection methodology is outlined in chapter 1 in the full report.

Challenges with the NCPI methodology and approach were also highlighted, relating to concerns about the:

- **scope and scale of evidence collection**: some questioned whether the inspection collected and triangulated all information necessary to build an accurate picture of policy, practice and key contextual issues. A lack of transparency around how conclusions were made was also highlighted.

- **extent to which the force context, such as limited resources or the role of external agencies was taken into account** when gathering evidence and developing recommendations. This was felt across almost all elements of the inspection activity, and consequently effected the perceived efficacy of the recommendations made.

Views on the inspection activities and outputs

The methods used by HMICFRS were perceived to be comprehensive, however, several improvements were identified across the data collection approaches. A key theme which emerged across the findings was a desire for greater transparency on how the methods were used to develop recommendations. While information about the inspection methodology and assessment criteria is widely available online and shared in advance with forces, there was a sense that more clarity on NCPI processes could help with engagement in the inspection programme.

Key findings on the main inspection activities are detailed below (more detail of each of the activities are included in the full report):

- **Case audits** are one of the main inspection activities carried out as part of the NCPI programme to detail the journey of the child through the police force by assessing a dip-sampled selection of case files. In some cases, the inspection team's assessments are compared with an assessment carried out by the force itself to support self-reflective learning and identify any disparities between the two. A number of other cases (not self-assessed by the force) are also reviewed by the inspection team to further understanding of the process and systems within a force. Case file audits are not used to understand how the systems of the force work, this detail is collected elsewhere in the inspection.

- This method was valued by the forces as it provided unbiased insight into, for example how cases involving children were handled. In addition, high-risk cases identified through this process were returned to the force for review and action immediately, which provided the opportunity to discuss actions collaboratively. However, this method was perceived to be time consuming and challenging for forces to asses some cases accurately. It was also felt that communication on the purpose of the method could be improved. This links to an overarching point raised in relation to transparency of methods to ensure forces properly understand the purpose of evidence collection and how it is brought together to form recommendations in reports.

- **Interviews and focus groups** are used to gather the perspectives of partners, senior staff and practitioners. Participant views on the usefulness and accuracy of evidence collected using this methodology were mixed. Three key factors

influenced participants' views on the value of evidence collected through interviews and focus groups. Firstly it was felt that efficacy of the approach depended on the individuals who were included. Secondly, there were mixed views on the scope of data collected, with some viewing the exercise as fair and others feeling it was perhaps overly narrow. For example, some participants for example felt that interviews had not included much discussion of good practice within the force. Finally, face-to-face interviews (rather than telephone interviews) were perceived to be a more effective and robust method of data collection, though participants suggested that they could be recorded for accuracy and transparency.

- **'Hot debriefs'** are verbal debriefs used by the inspection team to feed back emerging findings to the force and were held at the earliest opportunity after completion of inspection fieldwork in each force. This was generally viewed positively as the timing allowed for an immediate response to issues highlighted or to address misunderstanding. However, it was suggested that this could be improved by providing written feedback in addition to the debrief. For those involved in inspections after 2017, the approach also included daily debriefs with senior members of the force. This ongoing dialogue increased awareness of ongoing inspection activities and enabled the force to act on emerging findings immediately.

- The inclusion of **recommendations** in reports was perceived to be important in driving forward and sustaining improvements. For some participants, the recommendations reflected their force's prior understanding of itself; others felt the inspection team's expert external perspective offered helpful additional information and clarity on key issues. However, some felt that recommendations did not always take account of issues relating to the force's context, or they reflected an aspirational standard beyond what was thought to be feasible and proportionate.

- Finally, the provision of **areas of notable practice** provided participants with reassurance that specific existing policies and practices were working effectively. Some felt their inclusion offered 'balanced view', however, others felt praise was somewhat limited (particularly where the inspection report did not include an executive summary (in pre-2017 reports).

Recommendations

Overall and as detailed throughout the report, individuals from both inspected and uninspected forces and the inspection team spoke positively about the NCPI programme and thought it provided an important opportunity to reflect on child protection work. They valued having an independent, detailed appraisal of force policies and practice with the aim of generating rich, detailed and insightful information to support and sustain improvements across forces. However, suggestions were also raised about how the NCPI methodology and approach might develop in the future to ensure it continues to support and collaborate with forces in the most effective way. Recommendations are set out below:

- Awareness of the NCPI programme was higher among those more closely involved in child protection or wider safeguarding work and senior leaders. Those in frontline roles were less likely to be aware of the NCPI programme; more than half of survey respondents (55%) were not aware of the NCPI programme prior to the survey and three in five (60%) respondents did not know whether their force had been inspected as part of the NCPI programme. This suggests that HMICFRS could perhaps **do more to publicise the aims and benefits of the inspection programme** across staff grades and police units, working with forces to ensure information is cascaded in a clear and accessible way, to support buy-in and prioritisation of safeguarding work.

- Throughout the evaluation, the appetite for more **sharing of good practice** was highlighted. This is a key outcome within the inspection team pathway and success in this area has the potential to improve a range of other police force and child outcomes. Individuals from both inspected and uninspected forces reported they would value having more opportunities to learn from each other. They suggested that HMICFRS has a key role to play in facilitating this through, for example, the learning events which could be usefully scaled up. However, the limited awareness of learning events, and the lack of dissemination of inspection findings more widely, suggests that HMICFRS should work to improve how evidence is shared to drive improvements through this mechanism.

- Though work is undertaken to coordinate different inspection activities, further **consideration should be given to the timing of inspection work and the potential for further coordination with other programmes** such as PEEL. The amount of work involved in supporting inspection activities and the challenges of accommodating numerous inspections were highlighted and believed to be especially problematic for smaller and under-resourced police force areas. Greater coordination around scheduling could support effective preparation and ensure that the senior officers required for inspections are available.

- It was suggested that HMICFRS could **provide more clarity over the range and purpose of inspection work** undertaken with forces, including PEEL and Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAIs). It was felt that an improved understanding of the aims of different inspections and how they fit together might help to increase and sustain engagement with the inspectorate, which in turn should lead to better outcomes for children.

- The possibility of **building in an element of more iterative and continuous monitoring** was raised. It was felt that HMICFRS might get a more well-rounded and contextualised view of a force if information was collected and built upon over time. However, the extent to which timely recommendations could be made and acted upon with a more iterative programme might be limited. HMICFRS is working on developing a more efficient monitoring and inspection process, which started in 2018. This work also includes the development of a recommendations register, whereby recommendations can be tracked and measured more efficiently across different inspections. It is hoped that this new process will help HMICFRS monitor what forces are doing and assess progress against recommendation, supporting practice improvements.

- Building on the information provided to forces after inspections, some individuals from inspected forces suggested that HMICFRS could do more to **support the practical implementation of changes**. There was a sense that the reports sometimes focused too heavily on what needed to change and missed an explanation of how this might happen. Opportunities to learn from other forces (as outlined above) could help operationalise recommendations for forces, by drawing on their experiences. However, it is important to note that HMICFRS is an inspectorate not a regulator, and therefore its powers only include the ability to make recommendations and not necessarily be prescriptive in how to implement them.

Key impacts table

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
Improvements in the quality and provision of training to staff and officers	Police force-level outcome pathway	**Frequency of training:** • Higher proportions of survey respondents from inspected forces reported having training more recently in two key areas: 'identifying children at risk' (44% of those in inspected respondents, as compared with 32% of respondents in uninspected forces), and 'listening and speaking to children' (31% of those in inspected respondents and 24% in uninspected). • Frontline staff in child protection were most likely to have had training, and those in custody were least likely. Respondents working in custody units were least likely to report that they had received training in each of the four areas: 35% reported that they had not received training in any of these, as compared with, for example, 19% of those in neighbourhood policing and 9% of those in child protection teams. **Quality and provision of training:** • Those who had received training more recently were more likely to report positive views about its quality – 81% of those who had received training in the last year felt that it was helpful, as compared with 55% who had been trained a year or more previously. • The case study data and document review also highlighted evidence of training which had been delivered to officers and staff to improve knowledge and understanding around child protection. This included

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
		how to interact with children and how to consider 'the voice of the child'.
Crime and incident systems and processes within the force are better equipped to record timely, accurate and high quality information	Police force-level outcome pathway	• A large majority of respondents (79%) agreed that their systems and processes allowed them to efficiently record all relevant information. However, only 38% of respondents agreed that the information on the systems was of a high quality and contained the necessary level of detail. • Respondents in inspected forces were more likely to agree that they could access information in a timely manner (61% as compared with 49% who agreed in uninspected forces) and that information on the system was of a high quality. • A higher proportion of respondents working in child protection units agreed with the statements on systems and processes than in custody and neighbourhood policing units.
Increase in quality of information collected about children who come into contact with the police	Police force-level outcome pathway	• Respondents in inspected forces were more likely to agree that information on the system was of a high quality and contains the sufficient level of detail (41% agreed, compared with 34% in uninspected forces).
Better information sharing / integration of systems between the police and other agencies	Police force-level outcome pathway	• Overall, the survey found that 58% of respondents agreed that information is effectively shared with partner agencies (10% disagreed and 19% neither agreed nor disagreed). • The case study data also highlighted that new systems and governance structures had been put in place within the force and more widely with partners. This included for example, areas of responsibility being reassigned within the force, the creation of new

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
		strategic groups, and ensuring consistent ways of working with safeguarding partners.
Leadership and management are increasingly committed to and supportive of using a child-centred approach	Police force-level outcome pathway	• Overall, over two thirds (69%) felt the management and leadership team had 'very much' or 'mostly' fostered an environment which effectively safeguards children. Furthermore, three quarters (74%) of respondents agreed that they felt supported in their decision-making about children. Results did not differ by inspection status. • About two thirds of respondents (63%) agreed that there was a culture of listening to children in their police force. This varied in relation to their inspection status: 66% of those in inspected forces agreed with this statement, compared with 60% in uninspected forces.
Staff and officers have improved knowledge to safeguard children	Police force-level outcome pathway	• Overall, about a third (29%) of respondents felt that they had all the information and knowledge they needed to effectively safeguard children, more than half (56%) wanted to know more about specific areas, and a further 10% said they did not have the information they needed. There was no evidence of differences between respondents in inspected compared with uninspected forces. • Results differed according to respondents' roles, with 20% of respondents from neighbourhood policing units and 23% from custody units reporting that they had all the information they needed, compared with 43% in child protection teams. • A smaller proportion of those who had worked for the police for up to five years (17%) said they had all the information the needed, compared to 31% of those with over five years' experience.

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
		• The case study data also highlighted that some forces had increased their awareness about their responsibilities to children in custody.
Staff and officers feel more confident and supported to make child-centred decisions	Police force-level outcome pathway	• Overall, the survey results indicated that respondents felt overwhelmingly confident in making child-centred decisions, with the majority (80%) saying that they felt either very or somewhat confident in doing so.
		• Levels of confidence did not differ significantly according to whether or not forces had been inspected as part of the NCPI programme, the JTAI programme, both or neither.
		• **Variation according to recency of training**: Respondents who had received training were more likely to report feeling confident in making child-centred decisions. Similar proportions of those who had received training within a year and more than a year ago reported feeling confident (85% and 86% respectively), compared with 54% of those who had either not received training at all or did not know when they had done so.
		• **Variation according to views on supportiveness of management and leadership teams**: Those who felt supported by their force's management and leadership teams in their decisions about the needs of vulnerable or at-risk children were also more likely to feel confident in their decision-making. This was the case for 90% of those who felt supported, whereas 65% of those who did not feel supported by the leadership team nonetheless felt confident in their ability to make child-centred decisions.
		• **Variation according to area of work**: Those working in custody roles were less likely to be confident in making child-centred

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
		decisions than those working in Child Protection and neighbourhood policing units. Nine in ten (91%) respondents working in child protection reported feeling confident, while this was 76% for those in neighbourhood policing and 63% for those in custody. • **Variation according to length of service**: Differences were also apparent in relation respondents' length of service. One in five (20%) of those who had worked for the police for up to five years stated that they did not feel confident in their ability to make child-centred decisions, while the corresponding proportion for those who had worked in the police for over five years was only 6%.
Staff and officers have a better understanding of the risks offenders and 'high risk individuals' pose to children	Police force-level outcome pathway	• The case study findings highlighted two reported areas of impact: Improved information sharing about those at risk of harm to children across the force including with staff who sat outside the specialist sex offender teams and improved identification of CSE perpetrators and information sharing between agencies.
Staff and officers are better able to identify children in need and their families	Police force-level outcome pathway	• The case study findings highlighted an improved approach to identifying children at risk, assessing risks and making onward referrals. For example, one force had introduced a system to flag and prioritise incidents that involved children. This was also evident in the document review, which highlighted greater consistency and depth in risk assessments.
Staff and officers are better able to support and signpost children in need and their families	Police force-level outcome pathway	• Ensuring consistent ways of working with safeguarding partners to refer to appropriate support was highlighted as a key area of improvement across forces in the case study data and document review. However, case study findings and the open response survey data showed that some felt that partnerships were not as effective as

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
		they could be, which was thought to impact on the transfer of information and referrals.
Children are increasingly engaged and listened to throughout their interactions with police	Police force-level outcome pathway	• About two thirds of respondents (63%) agreed that there was a culture of listening to children in their police force. This varied very slightly in relation to their inspection status: 66% of those in inspected forces agreed with this statement, compared with 60% in uninspected forces. Less than half (45%) of those working in custody units felt their force had a culture of listening to children, compared with, for example, 60% in neighbourhood policing and 80% in child protection teams. • The case study data also highlighted improvements in awareness and approaches around capturing detailed information about the child and the 'child's voice' across forces.
Children have improved interactions with the police	Police force-level outcome pathway	• Case study data highlighted that awareness campaigns and training had been delivered to improve knowledge and understanding around child protection. This included training on how to interact with children and how to consider the 'voice of the child'.
Inspection team has improved skills and confidence to deliver the inspection methodology	Inspection team-level outcome pathway	• The case study data highlighted that participants appreciated the inspection team members' relevant professional expertise and willingness to engage collaboratively with the force and their partners.
Inspection team is better able to develop and tailor the NCPI methodology	Inspection team-level	• The case study data highlighted that the inspection's flexible qualitative approach was felt to provide the inspection team with a richer insight into how forces operate.

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
	outcome pathway	
Improved assessment of the way police forces consider and support children at all stages of the child's journey	Inspection team-level outcome pathway	• The case study data highlighted four characteristics of the NCPI approach which were viewed as particularly important in making assessments of how forces consider and support children. These include the combining of multiple methods, focus on qualitative data, range of participants included in data collection and the two-stage design of the inspection approach.
Inspection methodology can better identify good practice and key areas of improvement	Inspection team-level outcome pathway	• The case study data highlighted mixed views on the inspection team's ability to identify good practice. On one hand, notable practice was thought to provide participants with reassurance that existing policies and practices were working and lent credibility to inspection findings. However, other participants felt that the inspection team could have done more to focus on areas of good practice.
HMICFRS more effective in disseminating evidence from inspection activities	Inspection team-level outcome pathway	• Findings highlighted that there was a lack of awareness about NCPI learning events (one of the main channels for evidence dissemination) among participants. Only 5% said that they had either attended an event or had heard about but not attended one. Nevertheless, there seemed to be a general appetite for this kind of forum. Two thirds (68%) of respondents said that they would be interested in attending an NCPI learning event. Interest was higher among respondents from uninspected forces (74%) compared respondents from inspected forces (64%).

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
Improved understanding of the aims and benefits of the NCPI programme	Both pathways	• The qualitative data indicated that awareness and understanding of the NCPI programme was generally higher among those more closely involved in child protection or wider safeguarding work, as well as senior leaders involved in implementing the inspection recommendations (for example Child Protection leads). Participants in custody lead roles external safeguarding partner roles had a lower awareness of the NCPI programme. • The survey results reinforced that those in frontline roles were less likely to be aware of the NCPI programme: results indicated that more than half of respondents (55%) were not aware of the NCPI programme prior to the survey. Overall, three in five (60%) respondents did not know whether their force had been inspected as part of the NCPI programme. However, the proportion of respondents who were aware of the NCPI programme was higher among respondents from inspected forces (51%) compared with respondents from uninspected forces (35%). • Awareness of the aims of the NCPI programme varied in relation to whether forces had been inspected. More than half (55%) of respondents in uninspected forces reported that they were not informed of the NCPI's aims, compared with 40% of those in inspected forces. This could suggest that inspection activity within a force does indeed improve frontline practitioners' understanding of the goals of the inspection programme, relative to those who have not been inspected.
More effective partnership working with key stakeholders	Both pathways	• Case study data highlighted improvements across the board in relation to partnership working. For example, new governance

Logic model outcome	Outcome pathway	Key impacts and differences
		structures had been put in place in some forces to ensure consistent ways of working with safeguarding partners.
		• Partnership working was also mentioned in the open-text survey responses as an area of best practice particularly through arrangements like the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), social workers co-located in police forces, or Triage teams. Overall 58% of respondents in the survey agreed that detailed information is effectively shared with partner agencies, though no differences were evident in relation to whether the force had an NCPI inspection or not.