



Joint inspection of multi-agency child protection arrangements

Pilot inspection: Greater Manchester Police

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About this report

Joint inspection of multi-agency child protection arrangements

HMIC has been working jointly with Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HMI Probation and HMI Prisons to develop a multi-agency inspection framework which will examine the delivery of child protection services provided by a range of agencies working in each local authority across England. The joint inspection framework has come about as a result of recommendations made in the *Munro Review of Child Protection*, which was published in May 2011 and is available from the Department for Education's website (www.education.gov.uk).

Pilot inspection programme

The inspections are due to start formally in June 2013, and over a three-year period will cover all local authority areas. Before this, a pilot inspection programme will ensure that:

- each inspectorate is looking at the right areas of activity for the agency it has primary responsibility for; and
- the inspectorates can work together to provide the multi-agency oversight that is required.

Pilot inspection in Greater Manchester

As part of this pilot programme, in November 2013 HMIC conducted an unannounced inspection of the child protection services delivered by the Greater Manchester Police within the Rochdale Metropolitan Borough local authority area. The 'findings' section of this report explains what we found.

Greater Manchester Police was selected to take part in the pilot inspection programme because it was identified as a complex force with ten local authorities within its boundaries, each of which is separately responsible for child protection.

The HMIC inspection took place while Ofsted were conducting their child protection inspection of the services delivered by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council. The inspections were conducted independently and although inspectors from both organisations were in contact with each other, neither inspection affected the findings of the other. The Ofsted inspection report can be downloaded from the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Summary of findings

Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including:

- examination of case files; referral forms; force policy documents; and multi-agency documentation.
- interviews with staff including Assistant Chief Constable Steve Heywood, Detective Chief Superintendent Mary Doyle, and Detective Superintendent Phil Owen; and representatives from Child Protection Teams, Domestic Abuse Teams and the Offender Management Unit.

Strengths

- During the time inspectors were within Greater Manchester it was apparent that police officers and staff responsible for managing child abuse investigations or involved within child protection procedures were knowledgeable, committed and dedicated to providing good outcomes for children identified as being at risk of harm.
- The Assistant Chief Constable and Detective Chief Superintendent responsible for Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) have a strong commitment to child protection and have a clear strategic vision of how to develop their child protection services across Greater Manchester. The Assistant Chief Constable previously had responsibility at a Chief Superintendent level for PVP and the Detective Superintendent has been in post for the past four years. This provides an additional level of expertise and continuity within the current leadership structure and is having a positive influence on partnership working.
- The creation of the 'Pan-Manchester' Safeguarding Children Group is regarded as good practice. Greater Manchester Police are working to create improved consistency in the delivery of child protection services across the whole of the policing area by engaging positively with key partners.
- The centralisation of Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) Teams across Greater Manchester is regarded as a positive development. This approach allows for dedicated leadership, consistency of delivery and economies of scale whilst also introducing new initiatives (such as the centralisation of missing person staff and MARAC administrator) across the force area. It also creates greater flexibility and enhanced resilience in the use of specialist PVP staff.
- The force has a well-trained and well-supported group of specialist officers working within child protection. All staff either have been or are

in the course of being trained through the Initial Crime Investigator Development Programme (ICIDP). Similarly, the same staff have completed, or are in the course of completing, the Specialist Child Abuse Investigator Development Programme (SCAIDP). This level of development is regarded as appropriate for such specialist staff and the force advised inspectors that further continual professional development is to be provided.

- There are strong working relationships between specialist police PVP staff and their colleagues within the local authority's Child Social Care (CSC) team. This approach to joint working improves the arrangements for the protection of children and young people.
- Inspectors witnessed some excellent individual examples of police child protection work, with officers displaying a good blend of investigative and protective approaches. This ensured both that the protection of children remained central to their efforts and that criminal investigative opportunities were exploited. One such example was the work undertaken to protect three young boys in a family where their 11-year-old brother was displaying sexually harmful behaviour. The criminal investigation continued, compassionately recognising the needs of the 11 year old, to a satisfactory conclusion.
- Domestic abuse and other child concern referrals are managed in an efficient and timely manner with relevant information routinely passed to CSC. The inspectors found meaningful and consistent communication between partners involved in the management of high risk domestic abuse cases. This led to the formulation of joint plans, with staff in both the police and CSC being aware of actions that the other agency had planned. These plans were focused on the child, whose safety was clearly shown to be of paramount importance.
- Greater Manchester Police is making progress in developing PVP information sharing with its partners across Greater Manchester and its plan to create a number of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs is viewed as good practice. HMIC is interested in this development and will examine progress during future child protection inspections.

Areas for Improvement

Section 47 Enquiries¹

- Strategy Discussions² were not always adequately recorded within case papers relating to child protection investigations. As a result it was unclear as to what decisions had been made to protect children or what were the key priorities within any criminal investigation. This creates a risk that critical actions may fail to be completed at the appropriate time or completed at all. Actions arising from Strategy Discussions should be explicitly documented and available to all relevant staff in an easy-to-access location.
- From the inspection of case records it was unclear what, if any, research had been conducted during the initial stages of risk assessing Section 47 enquiries referred to the police. Routine checks of force and national indices (such as the Police National Computer and Police National Database) were not recorded and it was not possible to determine how protective activity had been influenced by research conducted.
- The Inspectors also found that relevant documents relating to Section 47 enquiries were not always stored within the case record. Examples were found where scanned electronic documents relating to referrals were not linked to the corresponding case record but were still attached to e-mails held in officer's personal folders. This meant the documents were not readily available to or retrievable by other staff.
- All finalised Section 47 cases were found to have been approved by either the Detective Sergeant from the Child Protection Unit or the Unit Detective Inspector. However, there was a lack of evidence of supervisory inputs during the earlier stages of the enquiry and inspectors found a number of gaps in the investigation that should have been identified by a supervisory officer.

Domestic Abuse

- Domestic abuse is a key indicator that children are at risk of harm. However, a recent internal audit conducted by Greater Manchester Police had revealed a 10% inaccuracy rate over the categorisation of

¹ The aim of the Section 47 enquiry is to determine whether action is needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child or children who are the subject of an enquiry.

² Multi-agency meeting to determine risks children face and what actions need to be taken to mitigate those risks.

domestic abuse incidents. This means a significant number of domestic abuse cases fell outside the routine examination of incidents for child protection consideration.

- When children had been present on the premises at the time officers attended an incident, Command and Control incident logs were not updated to confirm that welfare checks had been conducted. In addition there very few cases where any comments had been made about how the incident had affected the children present. Safety checks should be conducted and recorded during all domestic abuse incidents and officers should report, where they are able, on the demeanour of the children and how the incidents appears to have affected them. This can greatly assist any subsequent assessment by CSC.
- When Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessments are assessed as 'Standard', they are reviewed by the Referral and Assessment Team. National guidance states that reviewing 'Standard' cases a dip-sampling methodology should be employed, rather than every case to be scrutinised. The conducting of the 'Standard' review places a substantial demand of the domestic abuse staff within the Greater Manchester Police and it is recommended that the force reviews its procedures to ensure it is using its staff efficiently.
- Inspectors found that the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process within Rochdale did not add any appreciable value to work already being conducted. The cases examined had already been subject of effective information sharing prior to the conference and the protective activity had already been planned or completed in partnership. Few additional actions were created during the conferences and where actions were created these were not monitored through to completion, and staff were not held to account when updates had not been provided.

Missing Children

- The force demonstrates a commitment to the management of missing children but inspectors considered that intelligence gathering was under-developed and therefore did not assist in the identification of children and young people at risk of harm. It was unclear how CSC in Rochdale is notified that missing children have returned in order to conduct 'return interviews'. It was also unclear how cases that failed to reach the 'missing' status are researched to identify patterns and trends that assist in the identification of the risk of harm. Greater Manchester Police should review these particular issues to ensure that opportunities to protect children and young people are not being missed.

Child Sexual Exploitation

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has been identified as a problem within Greater Manchester and the force is responding with its partners. The response in Rochdale is at an early stage of development. CSE will be one of the areas examined during the forthcoming multi-agency child protection (MACP) inspections.