



Promoting improvements  
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# National Child Protection Inspections

Humberside Police  
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## Foreword

All children deserve to grow up in a safe environment, cared for and protected from harm. Most children thrive in loving families and grow to adulthood unharmed. Unfortunately, though, too many children are still abused or neglected by those responsible for their care; they sometimes need to be protected from other adults with whom they come into contact. Some of them occasionally go missing, or end up spending time in places, or with people, harmful to them.

While it is everyone's responsibility to look out for vulnerable children, police forces, working together and with other agencies, have a particular role in protecting children and making sure that, in relation to their safety, their needs are met.

Protecting children is one of the most important tasks the police undertake. Police officers investigate suspected crimes and arrest perpetrators, and they have a significant role in monitoring sex offenders. They have the powers to take a child in danger to a place of safety, and to seek restrictions on offenders' contact with children. The police service also has a significant role, working with other agencies, in ensuring children's protection and well-being in the longer term.

As they go about their daily tasks, police officers must be alert to, and identify, children who may be at risk. To protect children effectively, officers must talk to children, listen to them, and understand their fears and concerns. The police must also work well with other agencies to play their part in ensuring that, as far as possible, no child slips through the net, and to avoid both over-intrusiveness and duplication of effort.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is inspecting the child protection work of every police force in England and Wales. The reports are intended to provide information for the police, the police and crime commissioner (PCC) and the public on how well children are protected and their needs are met, and to secure improvements for the future.

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## Summary

This report is a summary of the findings of an inspection of child protection services in Humberside Police, which took place in November 2016.<sup>1</sup>

This examined the effectiveness of the police response at each stage of their interactions with or for children, from initial contact through to investigation of offences against them. It also included scrutiny of the treatment of children in custody, and an assessment of how the force is structured, led and governed in relation to child protection services.<sup>2</sup>

### Main findings from the inspection

We found committed leadership and oversight by the chief officer team and the senior officers responsible for managing the force's public protection teams.

The chief constable has made child protection a priority for Humberside Police, and there is now an increased focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children.

We found that this is translating into positive action. For example, the force has:

- made some major changes to the way it provides child protection services across the county;
- provided a new, three-day public protection awareness training course to almost 1,200 staff; and
- made a concerted effort to improve work with the four local safeguarding children's boards to protect children across the force area. This was recognised and appreciated by partners and stakeholders, who told us they saw the changes implemented in Humberside Police as positive. They also spoke of a real change in the willingness of the force to engage with them, accept professional challenge and work together effectively.

These are encouraging changes, and HMIC acknowledges chief officers' commitment to developing a culture of continuous improvement. However, we found that the overall dedication and energy invested at this top level has not yet translated into consistent improvements in policing practice across all areas of child protection work.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Child' in the report refers to a person under the age of 18. See the glossary for this and other definitions.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on HMIC's rolling programme of child protection inspections, see: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/child-abuse-and-child-protection-issues/national-child-protection-inspection/](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/child-abuse-and-child-protection-issues/national-child-protection-inspection/)

This is evidenced by the fact that we graded the majority of case files we audited as either inadequate or requires improvement, with weaknesses in practice leaving some children at an increased risk of harm. In particular:

- the force's response to child sexual exploitation remains an area for further improvement. We found officers were still failing to conduct timely and appropriate investigations and to consider the wider risks to the victim or to other children; and
- the force needs to do more within custody to ensure that its officers and staff recognise and respond to children who need to be safeguarded. This is essential, as inspectors found that in the cases examined where bail after charge was considered to be inappropriate, no children were transferred to the care of the local authority because no suitable accommodation was available.

We were pleased, however, to find no evidence that children with mental health problems had been detained in custody in the 12 months before the inspection.

Inspectors were concerned about the poor standard of recording on police systems across the force. In a large proportion of investigations inspectors examined, we found that relevant information was not recorded. Inspectors were also concerned at the lack of recorded minutes of important meetings.

The lack of qualitative performance data does not help the force in understanding the nature and extent of the issues it faces. Such information is required for the force to measure its effectiveness and identify where resources are required to improve outcomes for children. The increase in resources for safeguarding is a positive step. However, without consistent data analysis and the appropriate understanding of performance, the ability of the force to assess how the increased resources are affecting outcomes for children is limited.

## **Conclusion**

The chief officer team displayed a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children. This was widely recognised by the staff, officers and other agencies with whom we spoke as part of this inspection.

However, while some improvements have been made, the force needs to do more to improve its safeguarding practice in order adequately to protect those children at most risk of harm.

The force's response to date to our findings has been positive and robust. We make a series of recommendations aimed at supporting Humberside Police in continuing this work.

# 1. Introduction

## The police's responsibility to keep children safe

Under the Children Act 1989, a police constable is responsible for taking into police protection any child whom he has reasonable cause to believe would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm, and the police have a duty to inquire into that child's case.<sup>3</sup> The police also have a duty under the Children Act 2004 to ensure that their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.<sup>4</sup>

Every officer and member of police staff should understand his or her duty to protect children as part of the day-to-day business of policing. It is essential that officers going into people's homes on any policing matter recognise the needs of the children they may encounter and understand the steps they can and should take in relation to their protection. This is particularly important when they are dealing with domestic abuse or other incidents in which violence may be a factor. The duty to protect children extends to children detained in police custody.

In 2015, the National Crime Agency's strategic assessment of serious and organised crime established that child sexual exploitation and abuse represents one of the highest serious and organised crime risks.<sup>5</sup> Child sexual exploitation is also listed as one of the six national threats specified in the *Strategic Policing Requirement*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Children Act 1989, section 46.

<sup>4</sup> Children Act 2004, section 11.

<sup>5</sup> *National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime*, National Crime Agency, June 2015. Available at: [www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk](http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> The *Strategic Policing Requirement* was first issued in 2012 in execution of the Home Secretary's statutory duty (in accordance with section 37A of the Police Act 1996, as amended by section 77 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011) to set out the national threats at the time of writing, and the appropriate national policing capabilities needed to counter those threats. Five threats were identified: terrorism, civil emergencies, organised crime, threats to public order, and a national cyber security incident. In 2015, the *Strategic Policing Requirement* was reissued to include child sexual abuse as an additional national threat. See *Strategic Policing Requirement*, Home Office, March 2015. Available at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## Expectations set out in *Working Together*

The statutory guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*,<sup>7</sup> sets out the expectations of all partner agencies involved in child protection (such as the local authority, clinical commissioning groups, schools and the voluntary sector). The specific police roles set out in the guidance are:

- the identification of children who might be at risk from abuse and neglect;
- investigation of alleged offences against children;
- inter-agency working and information-sharing to protect children; and
- the use of emergency powers to protect children.

These areas of practice are the focus of our child protection inspections.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, HM Government, March 2015 (latest update). Available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2)

<sup>8</sup> Details of how we conduct these inspections can be found at annex A.

## 2. Context for the force

Humberside Police has approximately 3,200 people in its workforce. This includes:

- 1,794 police officers;
- 1,181 police staff; and
- 221 police community support officers.<sup>9</sup>

The force provides policing services to a population of around 918,000 people over an area of 1,346 square miles. The area includes the city of Kingston upon Hull, the large rural area of the East Riding of Yorkshire on the north bank of the river Humber and the towns of Grimsby and Scunthorpe on the south bank of the Humber.

There are four local authorities in the Humberside Police area: Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council. The force operates a 'One Force' model comprising a number of functional departments for the whole force area rather than simply allocating resources to fixed geographic areas of Humberside Police's force area.

The most recent Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills judgments for the local authority are set out below.

| <b>Local authority</b>   | <b>Judgment</b> | <b>Date</b>   |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| East Riding of Yorkshire | Adequate        | November 2011 |
| Hull                     | Adequate        | August 2011   |
| North East Lincolnshire  | Adequate        | May 2012      |
| North Lincolnshire       | Good            | May 2012      |

An assistant chief constable is the overall lead for protecting vulnerable people, with support from a detective chief superintendent as part of the remit of specialist crime command. Humberside Police's central protecting vulnerable people unit (PVPU) oversees safeguarding across the force area. The PVPU is led by two detective superintendents, supported by four detective chief inspectors who provide leadership and day-to-day oversight of PVPU business.

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<sup>9</sup> *Police workforce, England and Wales, 30 September 2016*, Home Office, January 2017. Available from: [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-workforce-england-and-wales-30-september-2016)



Each local authority area has a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). The force works closely with partners to provide public protection services to the communities within the Humberside area.

### 3. Leadership, management and governance

The chief constable, senior team and the police and crime commissioner have a strong commitment to child protection, which is reflected in Humberside's police and crime plan.<sup>10</sup> We found clear evidence that the force recognises that it can do more to manage the risks posed to vulnerable children and implement appropriate protective plans. Inspectors found that force leaders are keen to build on existing good practice to improve how they work to protect vulnerable children.

The protecting vulnerable people unit (PVPU) is led by two detective superintendents, overseen by a detective chief superintendent and an assistant chief constable. The PVPU has detective chief inspector or detective inspector strategic leads for each type of vulnerability. It also has two main investigation teams which investigate all types of vulnerability (including child abuse).

Senior PVPU leaders take an active role in partnership working. The detective chief superintendent or detective superintendent, as a deputy, sit on the four local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs)<sup>11</sup> in the force area, ensuring visible senior police oversight and drive within the partnership. However, the volume of LSCB meetings requiring police attendance creates significant demand and capacity challenges, particularly at the detective chief inspector and inspector levels. The force has recognised this. It is reviewing these meetings to reduce the demand on these officers and identify a more efficient LSCB structure in Humberside.

Inspectors found that most PVPU staff spoken with who manage child abuse investigations are knowledgeable, committed and dedicated to providing good outcomes for children identified as being at risk of harm. However, many PVPU staff have not completed the specialist child abuse investigator development programme (SCAIDP), nor are they detectives or working towards full detective status. No SCAIDP courses are currently available to staff. This lack of training in safeguarding and investigation was apparent through our case audits, in which inspectors found that wider safeguarding issues remained unaddressed. This left children potentially at risk of harm and meant the force was not pursuing some investigative leads.

This risk to children is exacerbated by a lack of resources within the protecting vulnerable people team, due to vacancies, sickness and the inevitable demand pressures within the protecting vulnerable people units on investigators, supervisors

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<sup>10</sup> *Police and crime plan – April 2013 to March 2017*, Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside, 2013. Available at: [www.humberside.police.uk/sites/default/files/Police-and-Crime-Plan-2013-17.pdf](http://www.humberside.police.uk/sites/default/files/Police-and-Crime-Plan-2013-17.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> LSCBs have a statutory duty, under the Children Act 2004, to co-ordinate how agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

and managers. The demand on forces to safeguard children is both complex and challenging, increasing annually. Humberside Police is no exception and recognises this. No single agency has the capacity to provide the response alone; it therefore requires effective partnership and collaborative working, where agencies including the police have specific roles and responsibilities. Following a review in early 2016 the force invested additional funding and redistributed 23 detective posts from all areas of the force to PVPU. The teams are yet to feel the benefit of these steps.

The challenge of ensuring that demand across the force was properly understood and resource levels were appropriate to meet that demand has been identified as an issue for the force which we previously highlighted in our annual PEEL inspection in 2016.<sup>12</sup> In response, the force has reviewed its approach to resource and demand management and introduced a new force-wide shift pattern in September 2016. This has resulted in specialist PVP staff working to the same shift pattern as neighbourhood staff. However, it is unclear whether sufficient account was taken of the specific demands placed upon PVP teams as a result of the requirement for effective joint working practices. Inspectors were informed that the new pattern did not align with main working hours of partner organisations, the effect of which was that police staff in one child sexual exploitation team were not always present when co-located staff from children's social care services were on duty. Staff in the core investigation teams also reported that the current shift pattern does not match demand for their services.

Staff displayed a good knowledge and awareness of domestic abuse and understood that this was a priority for the force. This was clear to inspectors throughout the inspection.

The chief officer lead and senior officers from the protecting vulnerable people unit attend a quarterly specialist performance review meeting. The performance information considered at these meetings is limited, however, and focuses on the quantity of child protection incidents instead of the quality of the decisions made and the outcomes for children in need of help and protection. Therefore the clear senior commitment to improve is not yet resulting in consistently good safeguarding practice and better outcomes for children. There is also no record of actions or decisions taken in these meetings.

LSCB chairs described that, following a period of transition, strong partnerships were being built between agencies, with consistent representation and strong leadership from the force. Chairs saw the joint domestic violence strategy as good evidence of inter-agency strategic work, and particularly praised the detective chief superintendent's support and contribution. LSCB chairs also raised as an issue the lack of performance data. However, they regarded the newly-developed PVP

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<sup>12</sup> PEEL: *Police efficiency 2016 - An inspection of Humberside Police*, HMIC, 2016. Available from: [www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/peel-police-efficiency-2016-humberside/](http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/peel-police-efficiency-2016-humberside/)

performance dashboard (which provides LSCB members with police information and analysis) as a potential opportunity to improve understanding of how police performance affected the outcomes for children and families. Given the recency of its implementation inspectors were not able to assess the effectiveness of the dashboard.

Inspectors are concerned about the protection of some children who regularly go missing from home. Intervention and long-term inter-agency planning to respond to these cases are often ineffective. We found little evidence of the force considering early diversionary support for some children who had frequently been reported missing. However, we found individual examples of officers' good work.

The self-assessment and HMIC inspectors' case audits highlight that the force must address several issues in relation to its response to child protection, in particular the poor standard of its investigations and subsequent outcomes for children. The force also must be able to assure itself (such as through audits) that it is achieving consistently the outcomes for children that it would expect and that it identifies, understands and responds to gaps in its provision of service to children and children's families.

## 4. Case file analysis

### Results of case file reviews

During the course of the inspection, Humberside Police assessed 33 cases in accordance with criteria provided by HMIC. We asked the force to rate each of the 33 self-assessed cases. Practice was viewed as good by the force assessors in five of the cases and as requiring improvement in fourteen. In 15 of the cases practice was considered to be inadequate.<sup>13</sup>

HMIC also assessed these cases. We were pleased to note that we agreed with all the force assessors' gradings.

Inspectors selected and examined a further 63 cases where children were identified as being at risk. Sixteen were assessed as good, 21 as requiring improvement and 26 as inadequate.

Figure 1: Cases assessed by both Humberside Police and HMIC inspectors

|                         | Good | Requiring improvement | Inadequate |
|-------------------------|------|-----------------------|------------|
| Constabulary assessment | 4    | 14                    | 15         |
| HMIC assessment         | 4    | 14                    | 15         |

Figure 2: Additional cases assessed only by HMIC inspectors

|                 | Good | Requiring improvement | Inadequate |
|-----------------|------|-----------------------|------------|
| HMIC assessment | 16   | 21                    | 26         |

<sup>13</sup> The case types and inspection methodology are set out in annex A.

## 5. Initial contact

It is clear that Humberside Police has invested time in training frontline staff to understand their role in safeguarding. The force has provided 1,200 officers and staff with training about vulnerability. However, we remain concerned that staff may not understand or identify wider safeguarding issues, which may not be immediately obvious upon first report or officer attendance. Officers attending incidents are often not provided with vital information, for example if there is a registered sex offender living at an address or whether there are children present who are subject to a child protection plan.

In order to identify vulnerability better and provide this information, the force has recently introduced a vulnerability intelligence assessment team (VIAT). Officers, some with an understanding of protecting vulnerable people, are used to search all available systems and produce a comprehensive background of a family or person. However, the incidents reviewed by inspectors were of inconsistent quality. While many were detailed and contained advice, their value in assessing risk was reduced because they took over two hours to be added to the control room log, often after officers had attended. As a consequence, there is an increased risk that frontline officers attending incidents are not adequately informed of relevant information, which could be crucial to their making the right decisions about the protection of vulnerable children.

Inspectors found numerous examples where officers were deployed to incidents when child sexual exploitation was suspected involving either a victim or perpetrator and were not given this vital information by control room staff. An example involved a 14-year-old girl who had been identified as being at the highest risk of child sexual exploitation. Response officers were deployed to deal with an incident involving the girl. However, because they were not informed that the girl was at high risk of child sexual exploitation, their decision making did not reflect the full range of information known to the force.

Control room operators use the national decision making model (NDM)<sup>14</sup> supported by THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement) risk assessment. Operators using these decision-making processes to grade the level of response required. Any incident involving a child in need or at risk is graded as a priority for officer attendance.

The force has only provided limited training for control room staff in relation to vulnerability, including child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse and coercive

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<sup>14</sup> *College of Policing - Authorised Professional Practice on National Decision Model*, College of Policing, December 2014. Available from: [www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/national-decision-model/the-national-decision-model/?s=NDM](http://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/national-decision-model/the-national-decision-model/?s=NDM)

control. The force has recognised this and plans to provide training to all control room staff in March 2017 to improve understanding. To address this gap in knowledge, it is essential that the force provides this training. The introduction of the VIAT is in part an effort to mitigate this issue, but it is not operating 24 hours a day and in any case does not yet consistently identify vulnerability in a timely way to help assess risk to children.

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for Humberside Police. Most staff inspectors spoke with understood the need to note the demeanour and needs of children present at incidents of domestic abuse. This information should be recorded on the DASH (domestic abuse, stalking and harassment) risk assessment form which is completed on a hand-held device on attendance at an incident. Specific prompts about children require completion on the form. Staff may also fill out a form to refer children to the MASH and children's social care services, if they have concerns about children's welfare. However, inspectors were concerned to find that this information is not consistently recorded or acted upon, as the following example shows.

A neighbour called the police having heard screaming from an adjacent address. A mother of one and three-year-old boys had been assaulted by her partner. The police arrested and charged him. However, there is no entry relating to this incident on the child abuse tracking system, so it is not known whether the children were seen or if their welfare was checked. Further, it appears that no referral was ever made to children's social care services in relation to two young children exposed to domestic abuse.

A child's demeanour, especially in those cases where a child is too young to speak with officers, or where to do so with a parent present might pose a risk, provides important information about the impact of the incident on the child. Information about this demeanour should inform both the initial assessment of the child's needs and any decision to refer the child to children's social care services.

### **Recommendation**

- Within three months, Humberside Police should provide training to control room staff to ensure that they have an improved understanding of vulnerability, particularly child sexual exploitation, coercive control and domestic abuse, better to inform their identification, responses and risk assessments.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should review its processes to ensure that staff can draw together all available information from police information systems in a timely way better to inform their responses and risk assessments.

- Within three months, Humberside Police should ensure that officers always record their observations of a child's behaviour and demeanour in records of domestic abuse incidents so that its officers make better assessments of a child's needs.



## 6. Assessment and help

The force and its partners have invested significant time and resources to develop the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) teams in each of the four local authority areas of East Riding of Yorkshire, the City of Hull, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. These teams are co-located with partner organisations. We found a clear commitment to joint working. There are a variety of processes and operating models across these co-located teams. Some have health and voluntary sector partners within the team. The MASHs are the focal point for information exchange and inter-agency decision-making across the force area. We found some good examples of agencies working well together, identifying risks, making plans to reduce these risks and supporting children and families.

Each MASH has a detective sergeant who is a dedicated decision maker. He or she will hold strategy meetings with partner organisations when required, to decide which agency or agencies will deal with cases and how they will be progressed. The detective sergeants cover between 8.00am and 4.00pm, Monday to Friday. Outside these hours, a detective sergeant from the relevant PVP team conducts the strategy meetings. Inspectors are concerned that the meetings are not always held when required, or consistently documented. The consequence of this is that a joint plan to investigate the case and safeguard the children involved is not always recorded, potentially leaving children at risk of significant harm.

Shift patterns have recently changed in the protecting vulnerable people unit. The result of this is that their working hours are not aligned with partner organisations and as a consequence officers and staff are often not working at the same time as their co-located partners. This reduces the opportunities for effective joint working and information sharing.

Humberside Police has four safeguarding children co-ordinator posts, whose role includes attendance at case conferences, to ensure officer attendance where this is required or the compiling of a report for the conference where officers or staff are not to attend. The force has only two co-ordinators in post, and recognises that it has insufficient capacity across the force area. At the time of inspection, the force was recruiting another co-ordinator to address this gap.

Inspectors found inconsistent attendance at initial case conferences, with no clear risk based decision making being applied to decide whether police attendance was required or a report might be acceptable. Decision-making about attendance is often made by the co-ordinators without any supervision. The officer investigating a case seldom attends the case conference. The co-ordinators rely on what has been entered on the computer system about the case for their input at the meeting. This means that the police contribution to these important meetings can be of limited value and based on an incomplete knowledge of the case.

The force has provided training to non-specialist neighbourhood officers and staff about the identification of, and response to, child sexual exploitation. However, officers on some teams are not aware of which children are most at risk of sexual exploitation in their area, or who are the suspected perpetrators. Without this information, patrols do not routinely target suspects and places where children are visiting.

Inspectors are also concerned about the protection of some children who regularly go missing from home. We assessed ten such cases, judging five as inadequate and five as requiring improvement. Although the initial response to locate the child is often appropriate, early intervention and long-term inter-agency planning can be ineffective.

Inspectors found that where there is intelligence to suggest that a child is at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), but there is no CSE 'marker' on police systems, then this risk is not reflected in the risk assessment when they are reported as missing, as the following examples show.

A 14-year-old girl was reported missing from a children's home. Staff at the home informed the police that their records showed she was at risk of CSE with two named males as potential perpetrators. The police systems did not have a CSE marker. She was dealt with initially as an absent<sup>1</sup> child and later as a medium-risk missing child. This meant that activity to locate her quickly was not carried out as the level of risk to her was not accurately assessed, due to the lack of a CSE marker.

A 16-year-old boy was reported missing from a children's home. He had been missing on 33 other occasions and absent 21 times and was considered vulnerable based on his drug and alcohol abuse. Police intelligence indicated that he associated with other children at risk of CSE and was therefore potentially at risk of CSE himself. The case was not reviewed until eleven hours after he was first reported missing and after very little activity had taken place to locate him. This information was not used to inform the risk assessment process each time he was reported missing.

Inspectors' case audits showed a lack of learning from safe and well checks and return home interviews for frequently missing children. There were also significant delays of several days in completing these visits. Inspectors found that independent return interviews<sup>15</sup> for children missing from home are completed inconsistently

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<sup>15</sup> When a child is found, the child must be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home. Further information is in *Statutory guidance on children who run away or go*

across the force area with information not being recorded on police systems. Interviews with children at this stage can provide a wealth of information about the reasons why they are running away, particularly where this is becoming more frequent and the child is reluctant to speak to police or other agencies. A better understanding of why a child has run away can provide vital information to partners and support more effective risk management. It should inform planning and decision making about future safeguarding action. Also, in such cases inspectors found that there is seldom a 'trigger plan' (a plan to locate a child quickly when he or she goes missing frequently) on the database used to manage missing people which would contain this useful information for officers when a child is next reported missing.

Humberside Police has invested considerably in raising its workforce's awareness and understanding of domestic abuse. The force has provided the 'domestic abuse matters' training course, but officers do not always recognise the potential cumulative or escalating risks for children living with domestic abuse, as the following example shows.

The force responded to a 999 call from a victim of domestic abuse three-and-a-half hours after receiving it. Information in the log relating to the incident indicates that criminal damage may have been committed to the victim's laptop. When officers did attend the premises, they advised the suspect to leave the premises and concluded (incorrectly) that no crime had been committed. The force assessed this incident as standard risk. However, the victim had been the victim of domestic abuse on numerous previous occasions and there were also other risk factors including a child being verbally abused, drug abuse and separation. No referral was made to children's social care. Since this incident there have been five further domestic abuse incidents, most of which were assessed in isolation by attending officers as standard risk. We found that officers did not recognise that the escalation and frequency of the occurrences increased the risk of domestic abuse in this family.

Inspectors found that generally officers check on the welfare of children at incidents of domestic abuse, but do not always record the details of the child. This would enable more accurate referrals to other agencies.

The force does not always record the demeanour of a child, including what the child said to the officer. The force has tried to improve the recording of such information by including specific prompt questions on its domestic abuse risk assessment forms, but the quality of its responses remains inconsistent.

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*missing from home or care*, Department for Education, January 2014, available at: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/307867/Statutory\\_Guidance\\_-\\_Missing\\_from\\_care\\_3.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care_3.pdf)

There are backlogs across the force in domestic abuse cases assessed as standard risk (1,247) or medium risk (1,188). These cases are awaiting further research and victim contact. Inspectors reviewed a number of these cases and found several where children had been involved and where there had been subsequent incidents to which police had been called, as the following example shows.

The mother of two children (aged six months and two years) reported being sent intimidating text messages and photographs of damage which her ex-partner had caused to the house. She was too frightened to return home. The child abuse computer system was not checked but would have shown a child death linked to the suspect. There was an initial delay in police attendance while young children were left in a high-risk situation with a suspect who had attempted suicide the previous week. The officers failed to identify coercive and controlling behaviour by the suspect. They did not make a timely child protection referral, as this was not highlighted as a case involving children. As a consequence, the case remained in the backlog of cases awaiting inputting on the computer system.

For those children and victims involved in these cases there are no safety plans or safeguarding measures in place. The team reviewing these cases is under-resourced. Until the force deploys more officers to the team, safeguarding issues will continue to arise.

Humberside Police refers domestic abuse cases it assesses as high risk to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) for longer-term safeguarding to be put in place. Inspectors examined minutes of MARACs and assessed twenty-four cases involving children. These show the meetings to be well attended by police and other agencies, and clearly focused on children affected by domestic abuse, as well as victims. Information was routinely shared to protect victims of domestic abuse and any children otherwise affected by it. However, inspectors found limited police involvement in protective measures, which relied predominantly on children's social care services. We found little evidence of joint visits or strategy discussions about children.

## Recommendations

- Humberside Police should immediately take steps to reduce the domestic abuse cases waiting for further research and information sharing, ensuring that those involving children are dealt with as a priority.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should review its policy about attendance at case conferences, both initial and review, to ensure appropriate risk based representation at these meetings to properly contribute to safeguarding children.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should review its new shift system for its protecting vulnerable people unit to ensure the system enables close joint working with partner organisations.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should improve its practice in cases of children who go missing from home. As a minimum, this should include:
  - improving staff awareness of their responsibilities for protecting children who are reported missing from home and, in particular, those cases where it is a regular occurrence;
  - improving staff awareness of the links between children going missing from home and the risk of sexual exploitation; and
  - improving staff awareness of the significance of drawing together all available information from police systems, including information about people who pose a risk to children, better to inform risk assessments.

## 7. Investigation

Our inspection considered the extent to which Humberside Police child protection investigations are thorough, timely and demonstrated that the needs of children are central.

Throughout the inspection, it was apparent that most staff responsible for managing child abuse investigations were committed and dedicated to providing the best service and outcome for the child. Inspectors witnessed some good examples of child protection work by police officers who displayed a mix of investigative and protective approaches. This ensures that the safeguarding of children remains central to their efforts while all criminal investigative opportunities are pursued, as the following example shows.

A social worker made a referral after visiting a 4-year-old boy at school who disclosed that his mother's friend had kicked him on the leg causing a minor bruise. A strategy discussion took place and it was agreed that a joint investigation would be completed. A joint visit was made to the boy at school who made no disclosures though he stated that he did not like the 17-year-old perpetrator as he often made him feel sad. An examination of the boy's legs showed no more bruising or marks than one would expect on an active 4-year-old. The alleged perpetrator was known to children's social care and had mental health issues. He was living in sheltered accommodation and deemed to be unsuitable to be around young children. The boy's mother was seen and advised that she was not to have the 17-year-old boy at the house. The 17-year-old boy was similarly advised. Both agreed to this plan as they were warned that the mother was in danger of losing the children should she not co-operate. Children's social care continues to work with the mother and family.

However, through the self assessment process and case audits inspectors found the majority of investigations to be inadequate or requiring improvement (something also recognised by the force's gradings which mirrored HMIC's gradings). In many, the standard of investigation was poor and the outcomes for children were a concern. A lack of regular auditing means that outcomes for children are not monitored and gaps in service provision are not identified or understood. The force had identified these issues during its self assessment of cases and had begun to address the issues identified. Inspectors found cases involving possible child sexual exploitation in which the force had not pursued named suspects and clear signs of risk were not acted upon, as the following example shows.

A 15-year-old girl was referred to the police, after attending hospital stating she had sustained an injury after sexual intercourse. The girl had also previously suggested that a named 23-year-old man had sent her explicit photographs of himself. A joint visit (with children's social care) was made to the girl. While the girl did not wish to support an investigation, force records indicate that some further enquiries were considered. However, no further details were recorded on force systems so it is not clear what action, if any, was taken to locate and arrest the 23-year-old man. Additionally, the risks to the girl were raised at a meeting several weeks earlier and a social worker had been asked to speak to the girl but again there is no record of any action being taken to safeguard the girl or any attempts being made to locate the man. There was no trigger plan in place for the girl to ensure a prompt and effective response to incidents despite the fact she was clearly being sexually exploited.

Officers working within the two PVP teams investigate a variety of vulnerability-related crimes including child abuse. Staff inspectors spoke with expressed concern about staffing levels and workloads which had been adversely affected by sickness, other absences and unfilled vacancies. The increased workloads that officers experience lead to delays in gathering evidence and make progress with investigations. The consensus view of staff was that this has been exacerbated by the new shift pattern which means that officers are often not working alongside partners, making joint working difficult.

Some investigators have more than 20 cases which still require active investigation. Detective sergeants cannot review and supervise their teams' workloads as often as they should due to their own workloads and the volume of cases being dealt with by their staff.

Humberside Police has made efforts with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to improve the timeliness of charging decisions for cases, particularly where witnesses are vulnerable. The force and CPS have a good working relationship. However, at the time of the inspection there were still delays of up to four months for charging decisions. The Yorkshire and Humberside regional rape and serious sexual offences unit is reducing waiting times, with a 28-day target time for advice and decisions. When the force is slow to gather evidence and does not receive charging decisions from CPS in a timely manner (as inspectors found in some cases they reviewed), the length of time between the first call to police or children's social care services and a conviction or acquittal can be considerable. Delays are not in the best interests of children as they are unable to put the incident behind them; nor do they serve the suspect who may be on bail or in custody.

The digital forensics team has a backlog of work which at the time of the inspection meant a delay of up to eighteen weeks before a computer device will be examined. This is in part due to staff having left and the inevitable delay in recruiting and appropriately training new staff. The force has tried to address some of these delays by providing funding to outsource examinations, but delays still occur.

Humberside Police has recognised it must improve the way it tackles CSE. The force's two dedicated CSE teams work with co-located social care partners to target perpetrators. Each team manages an average of twelve cases at any one time, but has insufficient resources to deal with all reported CSE cases. CSE staff told inspectors that they had no job description and did not understand the role they were expected to perform. Although the teams conduct joint visits with other agencies to victims, inspectors heard concerns from team members that this is often not possible due to the new shift pattern, as they are not on duty at the same time as partners. They also report that they have received no training beyond that which all officers receive about CSE, and would welcome further information.

While the force has increased its focus on CSE, it has more to do to understand more fully the nature and extent of CSE across the force area and provide an effective response to protect children. The current problem profile is out of date and would benefit from greater input from information held by partners to give a clearer picture of CSE risk in Humberside and how the force can best tackle it.

The force has a dedicated unit for the investigation of children who are abused or exploited online, the internet sexual offences team (ISOT). Inspectors have significant concerns about the way in which this team is working. Staff within the team are reluctant to share information with partner organisations at an early stage in an investigation in case it is compromised. Our concern about insufficient or late sharing of information was also apparent where referrals to the local authority designated officer (LADO)<sup>16</sup> were required, where suspects are working in positions of trust or where they may come into contact with young or vulnerable people.

Inspectors have significant concerns about the way in which the ISOT manage and record information relating to the investigation of criminal offences. It was clear from the cases we reviewed that these teams do not comply with Home Office crime recording rules, as they do not record criminal offences until there is a suspect who is to be charged with an offence. Therefore if there is no charge, the crime may never be recorded. This means that the true level of crimes of this nature being committed in the Humberside Police area is unknown. This is an area of significant concern to HMIC, as the following examples show.

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<sup>16</sup> Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to have designated a particular officer, or team of officers (either as part of multi-agency arrangements or otherwise), to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children.



In May 2016, the force received intelligence from the National Crime Agency that a suspect had been having a sexualised conversation with a 14-year-old and had suggested meeting her for sexual purposes. The suspect was identified as a prison officer, was arrested, admitted criminal behaviour in interview and was bailed. At the time of our inspection six months later, the force had made no referral to a local authority designated officer nor recorded any crime.

In July 2016, the force received information that child abuse files were available for sharing from an address in Humberside. The suspect was a registered sex offender with a previous conviction for the possession of indecent images of children (IIOC). The suspect was arrested in August for the possession and distribution of IIOC, and images were found on his computer. A crime record was finally created the day before he was due to appear to answer his bail and be charged in November.

We have made the force aware of these concerns. It plans to conduct an audit of the crime-recording issues identified.

### **Recommendations**

- Humberside Police should immediately review how its internet sexual offences team (ISOT) operates to ensure that it shares information with partners at the earliest opportunity and that ISOT understands that safeguarding children is a priority.
- Humberside Police should immediately ensure that it complies with national crime recording standards.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should improve its child protection investigations, by ensuring that, as a minimum:
  - every referral received by the police is allocated to a team with the skills, capacity and competence to undertake the investigation;
  - investigations are supervised and monitored regularly and, at each check, the supervisor reviews the evidence and any further enquiries or evidence gathering that may need to be done; and
  - it develops an audit process which focuses on the outcomes for children.

## 8. Decision-making

When a case is clearly defined as a child protection matter from the outset, the police response is generally appropriate, and there are examples of effective decision-making to protect children. Frontline officers and supervisors displayed confidence in using their powers appropriately to remove children from harm's way. It is a very serious step to remove a child from their family by way of police protection.<sup>17</sup> Decisions to take a child to a place of safety were generally well considered and in the best interests of the child, as the following example shows.

A 14-year-old boy had been reported as missing from home and identified as being vulnerable to CSE. Officers took time to speak to the boy and understand some of the reasons for his going missing and the difficulties he was facing at home with his mother. The officers discussed the case with children's social care and as a result took the boy in to police protection. He was subsequently placed with foster parents.

However, inspectors were concerned by the force's failure to record data relating to its use of protection powers consistently. The form that officers completed when they exercised these powers should be uploaded to the force intelligence system, but this did not always happen. This means that the force cannot rely on or assess any data it holds and represents a gap in intelligence that might otherwise inform the force's decisions when dealing with future safeguarding incidents.

Inspectors were concerned about the poor standard of recording generally on police systems across the force. Accurate and timely recording of information is essential to make good safeguarding decisions for children. Humberside Police has several IT systems on which it records information relating to child protection. This is inefficient. It also results in duplication and confusion for officers in respect of how to locate the most recent details of an investigation. In a large proportion of the cases inspectors examined, we found insufficient detail of safeguarding and investigative activity. As a result, it was not always clear what decisions officers had made to protect a child, or what actions they took during the criminal investigation. The force recognised this during the self assessment process. It gave additional training to staff about the value of record keeping and believes this will improve the quality of records made. Accurate, timely and consistent recording of information on a single system would better support effective decision making. At the time of our inspection, the force was due to introduce a single, unified IT system which should address many of these issues.

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<sup>17</sup> Under section 46 of the Children Act 1989, the police may remove a child to suitable accommodation if they consider that the child is at risk of significant harm. A child in these circumstances is referred to as 'having been taken into police protection'.

The force does not consistently record decisions from principal safeguarding meetings in minutes. For example, the multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) meetings held in Hull and East Riding do not record minutes, and so there is no record of any actions agreed. Inspectors also found that the minutes of some strategy meetings and initial child protection conferences did not contain a record of principal decisions made. This means it is unclear what activity has taken place, or is required to keep children safe. It is also very difficult to hold staff and other agencies to account for their action, or inaction.

The force manages risk – including urgent child protection matters – on a daily basis at its pacesetter meetings. The force deploys officers to take immediate action to safeguard children based on risk assessments made at this meeting, as the following example shows.

A man was circulated on the Police National Computer as wanted for a serious assault on a child. The pacesetter meeting identified that he had access to other children, and allocated resources to locate and arrest him. The force arrested him several hours later.

However, inspectors observed that the pacesetter meetings did not always provide the necessary oversight or supervision, particularly for those reported as missing or absent from home. These cases were only discussed briefly at the meetings, and insufficient scrutiny was applied to the force's actions and investigative activity.

## Recommendations

- Humberside Police should immediately take steps to ensure that where police protection powers are used, all relevant documentation is recorded on a single database for auditing and practical purposes.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should take steps to ensure that all relevant information is properly recorded and is readily accessible in all cases where there are concerns about the welfare of children. Guidance to staff should include:
  - what information should be recorded (and in what form) on systems to provide evidence of good quality decisions;
  - the requirement that meetings where actions are allocated and decisions made are minuted to ensure a comprehensive audit trail; and
  - confirmation of the importance of ensuring that records are made promptly and kept up to date.

## 9. Trusted adult

In some cases reviewed by inspectors, though not all, officers had considered how they approached children and worked hard to establish a rapport with them and listen to what they were saying. This thoughtful approach resulted in an improved relationship between the child and police, as the following example shows.

A prompt effective response to call from a parent following conflict with their child. The attending officer adopted a sensitive and child-centred approach and mediated between family members, involving partner organisations directly from the scene. The officer then made a detailed referral to children's social care and an appropriate protective plan was developed.

Although inspectors found some cases where the decisions reached clearly took account of the needs and views of children, many case files contained very little information about the views of the child. The delays in speaking to children and dealing with suspects seen will do little to deepen the level of trust that children at risk might have in the police or other agencies and may lead them to conclude that the police do not believe them.

Where children are suspected to be at risk of child sexual exploitation and are frequently missing from home, inspectors found that the force should do more to understand why children are going missing. This information could be used to develop plans to work with and safeguard children more effectively, as the following example shows.

The force had information to suggest that a 16-year-old boy was associating with children who were at risk of child sexual exploitation, therefore potentially placing himself at increased risk. However, despite this information being highlighted in intelligence submissions, inspectors found no evidence that it was given any consideration when the force assessed the risks faced by the boy. Despite a supervisor being asked to review the report shortly after it was made to police, this did not happen and no action was taken until the following day. At that time (some 11 hours after the boy had gone missing) another supervisor reviewed the report and asked for three addresses to be checked. The action was not allocated to an officer and the enquiries were not carried out. Further, we found no evidence of social services being involved until the child returned. Despite the risk posed to this child and the numerous occasions on which he had been missing there was no trigger plan in place. The boy was left at risk of harm due to the insufficient investigation, or recognition, of the potential risk of child sexual exploitation that he faced.

## **Recommendation**

- Within three months, Humberside Police should ensure that its staff:
  - record the views and concerns of children;
  - record the outcome for the child at the end of police involvement in a case;
  - inform children, as appropriate, of any decisions that have been made about them; and
  - deal with child victims and witnesses expeditiously, to build rapport and trust.

## 10. Managing those posing a risk to children

Humberside Police has two dedicated units – management of sexual offender and violent offender teams (MOSOVOs) – to manage registered sex offenders. MOSOVO staff who manage offenders are generally well trained and have the right skills and experience. They understand the need to refer cases to children’s social care services where there are concerns for children and where relevant will attend initial child protection conferences. MOSOVO staff receive mandatory welfare meetings. However, staff vacancies and sickness within the teams mean that officers across the force were managing between 65 and 78 offenders. Inspectors consider this to be unmanageable for some officers.

Officers in the MOSOVO teams are trained to use the active risk management system (ARMS).<sup>18</sup> However, the detective sergeant (DS), detective inspector (DI) and detective chief inspector (DCI) have not been trained. This is troubling, as the DS must approve completed assessments and higher-risk registered sex offenders (RSOs) must have their assessments ratified by the DI and DCI.

Also of concern is that the approval of risk management plans, visit details and activity logs is being considerably delayed by capacity issues and redeployments of MOSOVO sergeants to perform duties for the multi-agency safeguarding hub and vulnerability intelligence assessment teams. This has hindered substantially the completion of ARMS risk assessments: the force has only completed 15 percent.

Inspectors found that generally the MOSOVO teams have plans in place to manage risks. However, inspectors were concerned that a considerable number of monitoring visits (to check that registered sex offenders were keeping to their registration requirements) were overdue, in some cases by several months. MOSOVO staff also tended to focus narrowly on the offender rather than taking a broader view of safeguarding children who were or may have been linked to the offender.

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<sup>18</sup> ARMS is a structured assessment process to assess dynamic risk factors associated with sexual re-offending, and protective factors associated with reduced offending. It is intended to provide police and probation services with information to plan management of convicted sex offenders in the community.

We also found that sometimes referrals to children's social care services were not made in a timely way. This put children at unnecessary risk of harm, as the following example shows.

A MOSOVO officer and supervisor were made aware of safeguarding concerns for an unborn child, following a disclosure made by a registered sex offender (RSO) in December 2014 that his son and partner were having a baby. Although violent and sex offender register records clearly showed that the officer would be making a referral to children's social care, inspectors could find no evidence of a referral. Following a visit to the RSO in July 2015, it was again noted on force systems that a referral to children's social care would be made. Again, inspectors found no evidence that a referral had been made at that stage. A referral was finally made at the end of October 2016, by which time the child was 22 months old. As a result no safeguarding intervention had taken place leaving the child at risk of harm.

Officers and staff within the neighbourhood community teams are not routinely made aware of RSOs living within their areas and are seldom deployed to find out information about them. The command and control system used in the control room does not flag the details of RSOs, but such information is flagged on the force intelligence systems. This means that the force may miss opportunities to gather useful intelligence about those who pose the greatest risk to children, as officers attending an incident involving an RSO may be unaware of the level of risk the RSO is assessed to pose to children or the wider public.

Multi-agency public protection meetings to develop and oversee risk reduction plans for RSOs were generally well-conducted and well attended by agencies, although there was no representation from the communities teams. At these meetings risks to children were identified, discussed and plans were put in place to mitigate the risk.

The force has taken some steps to disrupt and deter suspected perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. For example, taxi drivers have received training and will not receive their licence to trade unless they have undertaken the 'see something, say something' course (a campaign to raise awareness of the indicators and signs of CSE). The force has undertaken similar work with local hotels and, working in partnership with local fire and rescue services, has closed fast food premises used by perpetrators of child sexual exploitation to target children. It has an out-of-date problem profile for child sexual exploitation which it must update. The force therefore has much to do to understand and tackle those who pose a risk to children through child sexual exploitation effectively within the area.



## **Recommendation**

- Humberside Police should immediately provide ARMS assessment training to MOSOVO supervisors and managers, to enable effective approval of ARMS assessments.
- Humberside Police should immediately review capacity within its MOSOVO team, to include prioritisation of outstanding visits and actions.
- Humberside Police should immediately prioritise the development of performance information to ensure managers are aware of any backlogs and the level of risk these pose.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should take action to improve the knowledge of communities officers about registered sex offenders living in their area.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should improve its identification, disruption and prosecution of the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation, to include the development of an up-to-date multi-agency problem profile.

## 11. Police detention

If a child is to be denied bail and detained, the local authority is responsible for providing appropriate alternative accommodation. Only in exceptional circumstances (such as during extreme weather) would the transfer of the child to alternative accommodation not be in their best interests. In rare cases – for example, if a child presented a high risk of serious harm to others – secure accommodation might be needed.

Humberside Police has dramatically reduced the number of children being arrested and entering custody. Between 2010 and 2015 the number has reduced by 77 percent from 5,751 children detained in 2010 to 1,300 in 2015. This success of this is due in part to the Hull Youth Crime Partnership launched in 2009. As part of this programme staff from the youth offending team work in custody suites and identify children who have admitted to an offence which can then be dealt with more effectively and appropriately by a short voluntary intervention from Hull Youth Justice Service. The force provides training to student officers about the necessity to arrest and when the use of summons or voluntary interview might be more appropriate. The force has recently reinforced this through a poster campaign. While this is positive, it is essential the force operates an audit process which ensures that the action taken through voluntary interview or summons rather than arrest is the most appropriate method of dealing with children. Inspectors reviewed three cases where voluntary interview was used. We noted considerable delays in conducting the interviews. In one case the use of voluntary interview meant that the potential for gathering forensic evidence in an assault case was lost.

In the 12 month period from October 2015, the force arrested 1,264 juveniles. Fifty of these resulted in the child being charged and detained. In 38 cases the force made a request for alternative accommodation to local authorities, but in none of these were children transferred.

The force has emailed its custody staff outlining the circumstances under which bail can be denied and the responsibility of the police to seek, and be provided with, appropriate alternative accommodation by the local authority in those cases where bail is considered unsuitable.<sup>19</sup> Inspectors examined eight cases where children were charged and refused bail. None of the children detained overnight were transferred to the care of the local authority. The force and the four local authorities in Humberside are developing a new protocol to address issues in the provision of alternative accommodation for children who may otherwise be detained in police

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<sup>19</sup> Under section 38(6) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 a custody officer must secure the move of a child to local authority accommodation unless he certifies it is impracticable to do so or, for those aged 12 or over, no secure accommodation is available and local authority accommodation would not be adequate to protect the public from serious harm from him.

custody. At the time of the inspection this had not yet been implemented across the force and therefore it was not possible to draw a conclusion about its effectiveness.

Inspectors were informed that the local authorities do not have secure accommodation available to them. This is problematic and means that vulnerable children are kept in police custody when this is not an appropriate place for them, as the following example shows.

A 15-year-old boy was arrested and charged with a serious assault after being negotiated down from a roof. The boy had previously harmed himself in custody, and his two youth offender service workers sat in the cell with him overnight as the local authority was unable to organise alternative accommodation.

Of the eight cases examined by inspectors, we judged one as good, four as requiring improvement and three as inadequate. We were told by custody staff that they had received no training in child safeguarding matters or how to recognise child sexual exploitation. This clearly compromises opportunities to identify risks to detainees and refer children to other agencies to safeguard them appropriately.

In all but one of the cases we examined, detention certificates were completed. Detention certificates outline to a court the reason for a custodial remand, are essential for police accountability and enable forces to monitor how well they are discharging their responsibilities under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. However, the recording of information was inconsistent and sometimes of poor quality.

The four local authorities in Humberside Police's force area have an appropriate adult scheme, which provides children and young people with 24-hour access to support and advice from an appropriate adult.<sup>20</sup> The scheme generally provides an appropriate adult in a timely way for interviews but children can be detained for a number of hours without having access to an appropriate adult. Inspectors found examples of young people being strip-searched prior to the attendance of an appropriate adult, with no documented rationale as to why this procedure could not be delayed.

Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 allows a police officer to remove an apparently mentally disordered person from a public place to a place of safety. Although a place of safety can include a police custody suite, such a suite should only be used in exceptional circumstances and it is preferable for the person to be taken directly to healthcare facilities such as a hospital. Inspectors were pleased to

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<sup>20</sup> Under section 63B of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 an appropriate adult is a parent, guardian, social worker or any responsible person over 18 years old and is not a police officer or a person employed by the police.

find that in the past year the force had not detained any children in police custody under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Humberside Police has reduced the number of children it arrested and detained in custody through increased use of alternative resolutions (as described above). It is working with partner organisations to agree and operate a protocol which will improve the availability of alternative accommodation for children who are refused bail after being charged with a criminal offence. As the protocol was newly in place in parts of the force and being negotiated in others, HMIC was unable to find any evidence of improved outcomes for the children for whom bail after charge is deemed unsuitable. However, this protocol could enable the force to reduce the number of children it detains unnecessarily in police custody after charge.

### **Recommendation**

- We recommend that, within three months, the force provides its custody staff with training that includes as a minimum;
  - an understanding of child safeguarding, recognising when this is required and what action they should take;
  - details of the referral process to children's social care or the multi-agency safeguarding hub;
  - confirmation of the difference between alternative accommodation and secure accommodation, and when these are required; and
  - information to provide increased knowledge and awareness of child sexual exploitation.

## Conclusion: The overall effectiveness of the force and its response to children who need help and protection

Humberside Police is committed to improving services for the protection of vulnerable people, and recognises it must improve how it safeguards children. The chief constable and police and crime commissioner have prioritised protection of vulnerable people and it is clear that there is an increased focus on this across the force. However, the force needs to do more to increase awareness and understanding of the need both to safeguard children, and to look beyond the obvious risk factors to identify any wider or underlying problems which need to be addressed.

Inspectors found some good individual examples of the force protecting children who were most in need of help, with good multi-agency work and a child-centred way of operating that effectively combined investigative and safeguarding approaches. However, we found most cases that we examined to be inadequate or requiring improvement, and therefore the force is not consistently protecting all children who are at risk. We found:

- poor responses by some officers, often missing the wider risk posed to others;
- failures to pursue appropriate lines of enquiry; and
- inadequate management and supervision arrangements and insufficient evidence of recognition of these deficiencies, which is concerning.

That said, the force has been receptive to the early findings of this inspection and its response has been encouraging.

Inspectors were concerned by the poor standard of recording on police systems across the force. Accurate and timely recording of information is essential for good decision-making in child protection matters and we found that important information was often missing or there were delays in recording it on police systems. This included:

- delays in recording the outcome of strategy meetings (minutes were often not taken);
- delays updating records about the progress of an investigation; and
- the omission of details about contact with children and families.

In a large proportion of investigations inspectors examined, we found that relevant information was not recorded. Inspectors were also concerned at the lack of

recorded minutes of important meetings where actions are allocated and decisions made.

The lack of qualitative performance data does not help the force to understand the nature and extent of the issues it faces. Such information is required for the force to measure its effectiveness and identify where resources are required to improve outcomes for children. The increase in resources for safeguarding is a positive step. However, without consistent data analysis and the appropriate management of performance with reference to performance data, the ability of the force to understand how the increased resources are affecting outcomes for children is limited. A performance and audit framework that focuses on outcomes for children who need protection would enable the force to monitor and improve its child protection work across the protecting vulnerable people teams, particularly in the areas identified during this inspection.

The force's arrangements for managing high-risk sex offenders require some improvement. It does not have sufficient capacity to ensure it carries out enough monitoring visits, supervises its management of offenders or carries out meaningful proactive work. While inspectors found evidence of some good inter-agency plans to manage risk, the force could do more to develop the knowledge and understanding of its community-based teams, which could provide valuable information to help manage these offenders and safeguard children in their areas.

The force's response to children who regularly go missing from home also requires improvement. It should particularly improve its early intervention and staff and officers' understanding of the link between children who regularly go missing and sexual exploitation. It should also ensure that feedback from safe and well checks and return home interviews inform an effective multi-agency response to safeguard these vulnerable children.

The force has tried to gain a better understanding of the nature and extent of child sexual exploitation across the force area. It has set up dedicated teams to tackle this. However, without a current problem profile informed by partners' information and staff who fully understand their role, the work of the teams lacks direction. The force is missing opportunities to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

Within its custody teams, the force needs to do more to ensure that officers and staff recognise and respond to children who need to be safeguarded. The force is developing a force-wide protocol to address the lack of local authority alternative accommodation for children who may otherwise be detained in police custody. This is essential, as inspectors found that in the cases examined where bail after charge was considered to be inappropriate, no children were transferred to the care of the local authority because no suitable accommodation was available.

It is not in the best interests of any child to be detained in a police cell under the Mental Health Act 1983. Inspectors were pleased to find that children were not

routinely detained in this way and that they found no evidence that any children had been so detained in the 12 months before the inspection.

It is clear that the force's senior leaders are committed to improving outcomes for vulnerable children, and the force has made some improvements in this regard. However, the force needs to do much more to improve its safeguarding practice in order adequately to protect those children at most risk of harm.

## Recommendations

### Immediately

- Humberside Police should immediately take steps to reduce the domestic abuse cases waiting for further research and information sharing, ensuring that those involving children are dealt with as a priority.
- Humberside Police should immediately review how its internet sexual offences team (ISOT) operates to ensure that it shares information with partners at the earliest opportunity and that ISOT understands that safeguarding children is a priority.
- Humberside Police should immediately ensure that it complies with national crime recording standards.
- Humberside Police should immediately take steps to ensure that where police protection powers are used, all relevant documentation is recorded on a single database for auditing and practical purposes.
- Humberside Police should immediately provide ARMS assessment training to MOSOVO supervisors and managers, to enable effective approval of ARMS assessments.
- Humberside Police should immediately review capacity within its MOSOVO team, to include prioritisation of outstanding visits and actions.
- Humberside Police should immediately prioritise the development of performance information to ensure managers are aware of any backlogs and the level of risk these pose.

### Within three months

- Within three months, Humberside Police should provide training to control room staff to ensure that they have an improved understanding of vulnerability, particularly child sexual exploitation, coercive control and domestic abuse, better to inform their identification, responses and risk assessments.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should review its processes to ensure that staff can draw together all available information from police information systems in a timely way better to inform their responses and risk assessments.



- Within three months, Humberside Police should ensure that officers always record their observations of a child's behaviour and demeanour in records of domestic abuse incidents so that its officers make better assessments of a child's needs.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should review its policy about attendance at case conferences, both initial and review, to ensure appropriate risk based representation at these meetings to properly contribute to safeguarding children.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should review its new shift system for its protecting vulnerable people unit to ensure it enables close joint working with partner organisations.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should improve its practice in cases of children who go missing from home. As a minimum, this should include:
  - improving staff awareness of their responsibilities for protecting children who are reported missing from home and, in particular, those cases where it is a regular occurrence;
  - improving staff awareness of the links between children going missing from home and the risk of sexual exploitation; and
  - improving staff awareness of the significance of drawing together all available information from police systems, including information about people who pose a risk to children, better to inform risk assessments.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should improve its child protection investigations, by ensuring that, as a minimum:
  - every referral received by the police is allocated to a team with the skills, capacity and competence to undertake the investigation;
  - investigations are supervised and monitored regularly and, at each check, the supervisor reviews the evidence and any further enquiries or evidence gathering that may need to be done; and
  - it develops an audit process which focuses on the outcomes for children.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should take steps to ensure that all relevant information is properly recorded and is readily accessible in all cases where there are concerns about the welfare of children. Guidance to staff should include:
  - what information should be recorded (and in what form) on systems to provide evidence of good quality decisions;

- the requirement that meetings where actions are allocated and decisions made are minuted to ensure a comprehensive audit trail; and
  - confirmation of the importance of ensuring that records are made promptly and kept up to date.
- Within three months, Humberside Police should ensure that its staff:
    - record the views and concerns of children;
    - record the outcome for the child at the end of police involvement in a case;
    - inform children, as appropriate, of any decisions that have been made about them; and
    - deal with child victims and witnesses expeditiously, to build rapport and trust.
  - Within three months, Humberside Police should take action to improve the knowledge of communities officers about registered sex offenders living in their area.
  - Within three months, Humberside Police should improve its identification, disruption and prosecution of the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation, to include the development of an up-to-date multi-agency problem profile.
  - We recommend that, within three months, Humberside Police provides its custody staff with training that includes as a minimum;
    - an understanding of child safeguarding, recognising when this is required and what action they should take;
    - details of the referral process to children's social care services or the multi-agency safeguarding hub;
    - confirmation of the difference between alternative accommodation and secure accommodation, and when these are required; and
    - information to provide increased knowledge and awareness of child sexual exploitation.

## Next steps

Within six weeks of the publication of this report, HMIC will require an update of the action being taken to respond to the recommendations that should be acted upon immediately.

Humbeside Police should also provide an action plan within six weeks of the publication of this report to specify how it intends to respond to the other recommendations made in this report.

Subject to the responses received, HMIC will revisit the force no later than six months after the publication of this report to assess how it is managing the implementation of all of the recommendations.

# Annex A – Child protection inspection methodology

## Objectives

The objectives of the inspection are:

- to assess how effectively police forces safeguard children at risk;
- to make recommendations to police forces for improving child protection practice;
- to highlight effective practice in child protection work; and
- to drive improvements in forces' child protection practices.

The expectations of agencies are set out in the statutory guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, the latest version of which was published in March 2015. The specific police roles set out in the guidance are:

- the identification of children who might be at risk from abuse and neglect;
- investigation of alleged offences against children;
- inter-agency working and information-sharing to protect children; and
- the exercise of emergency powers to protect children.

These areas of practice are the focus of the inspection.

## Inspection approach

Inspections focus on the experience of, and outcomes for, children following their journey through the child protection and criminal investigation processes. They assess how well the service has helped and protected children and investigated alleged criminal acts, taking account of, but not measuring compliance with, policies and guidance. The inspections consider how the arrangements for protecting children, and the leadership and management of the police service, contribute to and support effective practice on the ground. The team considers how well management responsibilities for child protection, as set out in the statutory guidance, have been met.

## Methods

- Self-assessment – practice, and management and leadership
- Case inspections

- Discussions with staff from within the police and from other agencies
- Examination of reports on significant case reviews or other serious cases
- Examination of service statistics, reports, policies and other relevant written materials

The purpose of the self-assessment is to:

- raise awareness in the service about the strengths and weaknesses of current practice (this forms the basis for discussions with HMIC); and
- initiate future service improvements and establish a baseline against which to measure progress.

## **Self-assessment and case inspection**

In consultation with police services the following areas of practice have been identified for scrutiny:

- domestic abuse;
- incidents where police officers and staff identify children in need of help and protection, e.g. children being neglected;
- information-sharing and discussions about children potentially at risk of harm;
- the exercising of powers of police protection under section 46 of the Children Act 1989 (taking children into a 'place of safety');
- the completion of section 47 Children Act 1989 enquiries, including both those of a criminal nature and those of a non-criminal nature (Section 47 enquiries are those relating to a child 'in need' rather than 'at risk');
- sex offender management;
- the management of missing children;
- CSE; and
- the detention of children in police custody.

Below is a breakdown of the type of self-assessed cases we examined in Humberside Police.

| <b>Type of case</b>  | <b>Number of cases</b> |
|--|------------------------|
| Child protection enquiry (s. 47)   | 5                      |
| Domestic abuse   | 5                      |
| General concerns with a child where a referral to children's social care services was made | 5                      |
| Sex offender enquiry   | 3                      |
| Missing children   | 3                      |
| Police protection  | 3                      |
| At risk of sexual exploitation   | 3                      |
| Online sexual abuse  | 3                      |
| Child in custody   | 3                      |

## Annex B – Glossary

|  |  |
|--|--|
| child  | person under the age of 18   |
| multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)                            | locally-held meeting of statutory and voluntary agency representatives to share information about high-risk victims of domestic abuse; any agency can refer an adult or child whom they believe to be at high risk of harm; the aim of the meeting is to produce a co-ordinated action plan to increase an adult or child's safety, health and well-being; agencies that attend vary, but are likely to include the police, probation, children's, health and housing services; over 250 currently in operation across England and Wales |
| multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)                                       | hub in which public sector organisations with responsibilities for the safety of vulnerable people work; it has staff from organisations such as the police and local authority social services, who work alongside one another, sharing information and co-ordinating activities to help protect the most vulnerable children and adults from harm, neglect and abuse   |
| Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) | a non-ministerial department, independent of government, that regulates and inspects schools, colleges, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, education and training in prisons and other secure establishments, and the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service; assesses children's services in local areas, and inspects services for looked-after children, safeguarding and child protection; reports directly to Parliament  |

multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)

mechanism through which local criminal justice agencies (police, prison and probation trusts) and other bodies dealing with offenders work together in partnership to protect the public from serious harm by managing sexual and violent offenders; established in each of the 42 criminal justice areas in England and Wales by sections 325 to 327B of the Criminal Justice Act 2003

police and crime commissioner (PCC)

elected entity for a police area, established under section 1, Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, responsible for securing the maintenance of the police force for that area and securing that the police force is efficient and effective; holds the relevant chief constable to account for the policing of the area; establishes the budget and police and crime plan for the police force; appoints and may, after due process, remove the chief constable from office

registered sex offender

a person required to provide his details to the police because he has been convicted or cautioned for a sexual offence as set out in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003, or because he has otherwise triggered the notification requirements (for example, by being made subject to a sexual offences prevention order); as well as personal details, a registered individual must provide the police with details about his movements, for example he must tell the police if he is going abroad and, if homeless, where he can be found; registered details may be accessed by the police, probation and prison service