

# PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of Cambridgeshire Constabulary



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# Contents

<b>Vulnerability in numbers .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>How effective is the force at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Summary .....	7
How well does the force identify those who are vulnerable and assess their level of risk and need?.....	8
How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?.....	12
How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners keep victims safe? .....	14
How well does the force respond to and safeguard specific vulnerable groups (missing and absent & victims of domestic abuse), and how well prepared is it to tackle child sexual exploitation? .....	17
Summary of findings .....	23

## Vulnerability in numbers



### Calls for assistance

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

**258**

England and Wales

**350**

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

**14.8**

England and Wales

**15.8**



### Crime

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

**55.8**

England and Wales

**61.6**

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

**+5.3%**

England and Wales

**+2.2%**

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

**16.6%**

England and Wales

**10.7%**

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

**9.1%**

England and Wales

**10.0%**

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

**+23.2%**

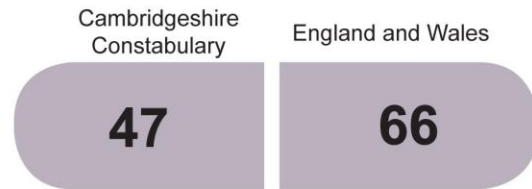
England and Wales

**+20.8%**



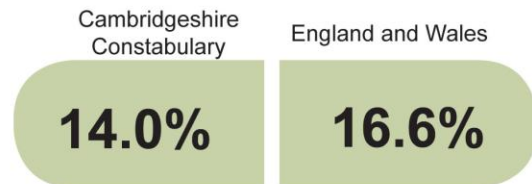
## Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

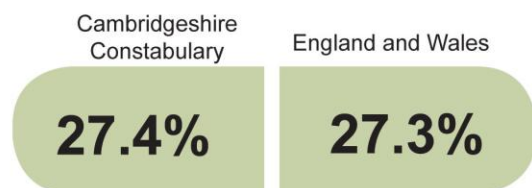


## Charge rate

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

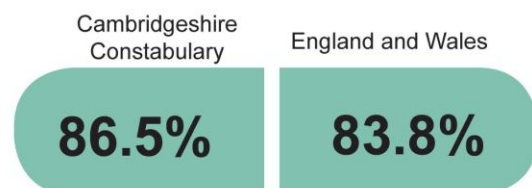


Domestic abuse charge rate as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015



## Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015



**Data:** for full details on the data used in this graphic see annex A in the vulnerability national report.

## Introduction

The public expects their local police force to support victims of crime by responding to calls for help, putting in place the right support and keeping them informed. It is particularly important that vulnerable people, whether or not they have been a victim of crime, are identified early and receive the support they need.

As part of its annual inspections into police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL), HMIC's effectiveness programme assessed how well forces keep people safe and reduce crime. Within this programme, HMIC's vulnerability inspection examined the overall question, 'How effective are forces at protecting from harm those who are vulnerable, and supporting victims?' We have considered in depth how forces respond to and support missing and absent children and victims of domestic abuse, and assessed how well prepared forces are to respond to and safeguard children at risk of sexual exploitation.

We have looked at four areas:

- How well does the force identify those who are vulnerable and assess their level of risk and need?
- How well does the force respond to vulnerable victims?
- How well does the subsequent police action and work with partners keep victims safe?
- How well does the force respond to and safeguard specific vulnerable groups (missing and absent children & victims of domestic abuse); and how well prepared is it to tackle child sexual exploitation?

At the heart of this inspection is the protection of people who are vulnerable. A force may therefore be judged as requiring improvement by HMIC where it exhibits shortcomings in one of these areas, even if its performance in other areas is strong, and even if there are many elements of its service that HMIC considers to be good.

This inspection follows up our 2014 domestic abuse inspection and reviews forces' progress on implementation of their action plans following that inspection. A national domestic abuse report summarising the findings across 43 forces is being published at the same time as this report.

During our inspection we collected data and plans from forces, conducted a review of case files and observed multi-agency meetings. We heard from victims of domestic abuse through a number of focus groups across England and Wales and conducted an online survey with practitioners, including Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, outreach and refuge workers, to gauge views on what has changed since the 2014 inspection and inform local practitioner focus groups.

During the in-force inspection, we interviewed chief officers in each force and held focus groups with officers, staff and partners, and made unannounced visits to police stations, force control rooms and specialist teams.

We also worked with the force missing person coordinator (or equivalent) to review cases of missing and absent children, including children considered to be 'repeat absent' and 'repeat missing' and children shown to be at risk of child sexual exploitation.

All forces are subject to significant cost reductions and these issues have been reflected in our efficiency reports published in October 2015. The judgments we are making in this vulnerability report are made understanding the financial challenges forces are facing.

This report sets out the findings from this wide-ranging inspection of Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

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

## Summary



**Requires improvement**

Cambridgeshire Constabulary is generally good at identifying vulnerable people and often responds well initially to meet the needs of victims who are vulnerable. However, there are important areas, particularly in respect of its service to victims of domestic abuse, where improvement is needed to ensure the police response is fully effective and that vulnerable people are protected from harm and kept safe. Given the risk that these weaknesses pose to some of the most vulnerable people, HMIC judges that overall the constabulary requires improvement.

HMIC acknowledges that protecting vulnerable victims is a clear priority for the constabulary. Police officers and staff understand and share this commitment. The constabulary has committed significant effort and resource to improve services to the public in this area. Generally, the constabulary identifies effectively if a victim is vulnerable and clearly recognises the need to ensure a police response that meets the needs of these victims.

Generally, the constabulary responds well to victims with the right level of expertise allocated to investigations based on the complexity of the case. However, the constabulary needs to improve how it investigates crimes against some vulnerable victims.

The constabulary has invested additional resource in specialist teams to support and safeguard vulnerable victims, such as domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation victims, and missing children. However, there is some confusion among frontline staff as to what their responsibilities are, and what is the responsibility of the specialist units. In addition, specialist resources are limited and workloads in some areas, particularly the domestic abuse investigation unit, is outstripping the capacity to provide a consistently good response.

The constabulary works well in partnership with other local organisations. There is a mature and effective multi-agency safeguarding hub which brings together appropriate services to share information and provide a joined-up response that supports and safeguards victims.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has made a good start in ensuring it is well-prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation and should continue to build on this approach to ensure consistent operational practice.

We found improvements in services since HMIC's crime inspection in 2014, particularly for victims of domestic abuse and missing children, although there is still room for improvement. Officers attending domestic abuse incidents have a good knowledge of how to assess risk and keep victims safe. However, HMIC is concerned that a lack of positive action, including the use of powers and other preventative measures, and an inconsistent approach to the collection of evidence using body-worn video cameras is putting vulnerable victims at risk and is undermining their confidence in the police to keep them safe.

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary is effective in identifying vulnerable victims and assessing their needs.

It is a priority within the Cambridgeshire police and crime commissioner's Police and Crime Plan 2013–2016 to improve the service provided to vulnerable people. The importance of service to this group is understood and supported by officers and staff at all levels. The chief officer team is leading on what needs to change to translate this objective into improved practice by frontline officers and staff.

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary is good at identifying repeat and vulnerable victims when they first contact the police.

Staff who answer 999 calls and those who deal with public enquiries in police stations recognise the importance of identifying vulnerability of people in cases so that they can make an accurate assessment of the police response needed. They have been trained to spot the signs of someone who might be vulnerable in some way. However, the computer system used by call-takers does not automatically flag up that a caller is already known to the police as a vulnerable person. This means that important information concerning the vulnerability of an individual may be missed and previous history may not be fully appreciated when a call is received and therefore the risk not fully understood. This means that the call-taker may not give the response the priority it needs and the response officers will not be fully aware of the situation when they make their judgments on risk and safeguarding at the scene. The constabulary recognises there are limitations to its IT systems and, together with Bedfordshire Police and Hertfordshire Constabulary, is due to implement a new crime and intelligence system in 2016, which it expects will address this issue.



Forces define vulnerability in different ways. The majority of forces use either the definition from the government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime<sup>1</sup> or that referred to in ACPO guidance.<sup>2</sup> Nine forces use their own definition or a combination of these definitions.

Cambridgeshire uses its own definition of vulnerability which is:

"Whilst acknowledging the need for some form of indicator of potential vulnerability the need to steer away from a rigid definition of vulnerability is paramount to success; to tie the term 'vulnerability' to a prescribed list of either crimes or circumstances may divert officers away from using their professional judgement and thus their ability to 'do the right thing'.

Currently, the indicators of vulnerability reside in the following considerations:

- is this a repeat victim?
- are they a persistently targeted victim?
- are they particularly vulnerable or intimidated due to their personal characteristics such as their age, mental health, learning ability, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation?"

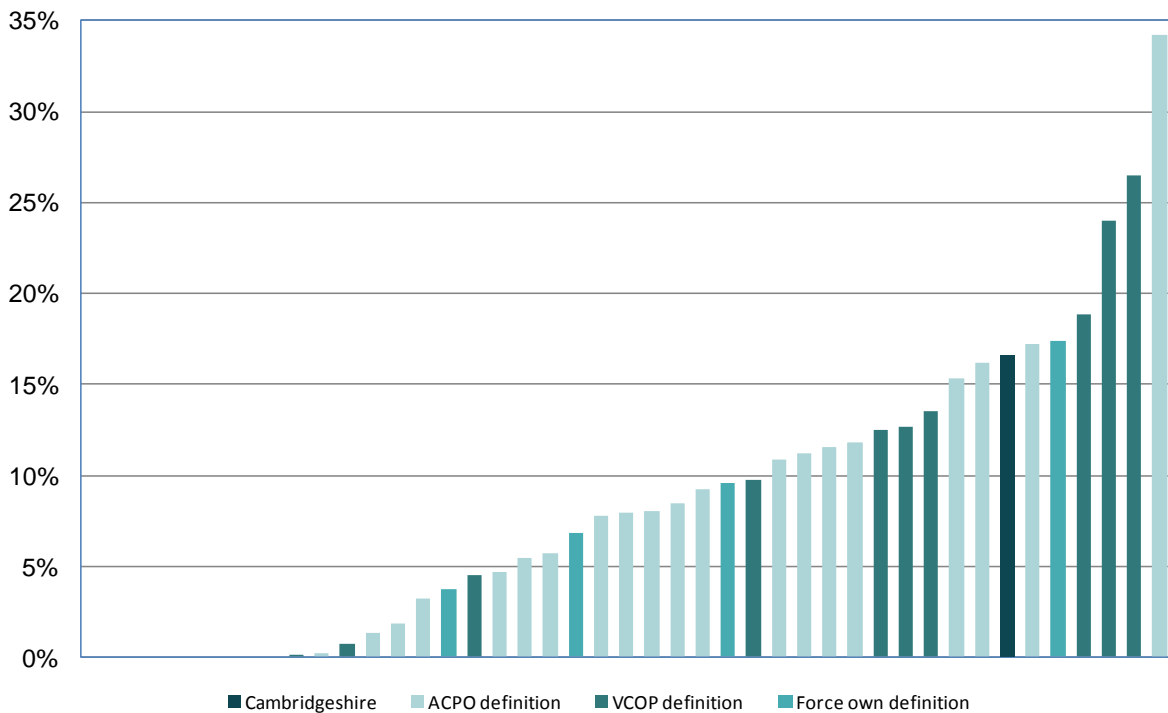
The proportion of crime recorded which involves a vulnerable victim varies considerably between forces, from 0.03 percent to 34.3 percent. For the 12 months to 31 March 2015, 16.6 percent of all recorded crimes in Cambridgeshire Constabulary were identified as involving a vulnerable victim. Eight forces were unable to provide this data at the time of data collection. There is no standard way in which forces are required to record on crime recording systems whether a victim is vulnerable and forces do this differently.

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<sup>1</sup> *Code of Practice for Victims of Crime*, Ministry of Justice, 2013. Available from [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/254459/code-of-practice-victims-of-crime.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254459/code-of-practice-victims-of-crime.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is now the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). *ACPO Guidance on Safeguarding and Investigating the Abuse of Vulnerable Adults*, NPIA, 2012, is available from [www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/vulnerable-adults/](http://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/vulnerable-adults/)

**Figure 1: The proportion of police recorded crime with a vulnerable victim identified, by force, for the 12 months to 31 March 2015.**



Source: HMIC data return

### Assessing levels of risk and need

The constabulary’s approach to assessing levels of risk faced by a victim, and what is needed to keep them safe, is effective. When a 999 or 101 call is received, the call-taker assesses the situation and decides the appropriate police response in line with the constabulary’s graded response policy which includes the mandatory police attendance at certain categories of crime or incident. The constabulary recognises that the needs of the victim as well as the type of crime should determine the police response. Supervision of 999 call takers and response officers is effective in checking that risk is being properly recognised and assessed.

Together with its neighbouring police partners (Bedfordshire Police and Hertfordshire Constabulary), the constabulary has agreed in principle to introduce a structured assessment to be used by call-takers in the control room based on the level of threat, harm and risk posed by the incident. This is known as THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement). The technique provides staff who are receiving calls for police attendance with a way of making a fully-rounded decision about the relative risk to the individual victim, the level of threat, and the opportunities to investigate a crime. This enables the police response to be more proportionate to the risk and threat to the victim. This is being implemented to prepare for the future collaboration of the public contact centres across the three forces in Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire.

Senior managers in the local policing teams review all new incidents involving vulnerable victims in their area at a daily management meeting, to ensure the risk assessment is appropriate and that the right investigative and safeguarding action is put in place. As a result HMIC found that the right people are generally sent to deal with the right incidents, armed with the right information.

Where the risk to a victim is assessed as high, the duty team within the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)<sup>3</sup> will liaise with other partner organisations that may have additional information about the vulnerable person and immediately advise on appropriate action.

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

In terms of providing services that best meet the victim's needs, Cambridgeshire Constabulary understand the requirements of some vulnerable groups better than others. For example, the constabulary has a good understanding of the needs of people who are vulnerable because of domestic abuse, based on a good mix of local analysis and reference to national guidance. However, the constabulary needs to improve its response in terms of taking positive action to deal with offenders and safeguard victims. Partner organisations and the voluntary sector are appropriately involved in the response.

HMIC found that the constabulary has only recently reviewed its understanding of, and response to, the needs of missing and absent people, resulting in the removal of the absent category.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary is still developing its approach to tackling child sexual exploitation, and has recently updated its detailed analysis of the issues facing the county. It continues to use a range of partnership data to improve its understanding.

The victim's hub, a new specialist team in the constabulary, provides a comprehensive means of assessing the needs of all victims of crime and tailoring a multi-agency response where necessary.

In order to provide the most appropriate support to vulnerable victims, the constabulary has invested in more resource for the specialist teams who are working to safeguard victims. The constabulary is currently undertaking reviews of some other specialist areas.

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<sup>3</sup> A multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) brings together into a single location key safeguarding agencies to better identify risks to children (and in some areas, vulnerable adults), and improve decision-making, interventions, and outcomes. The MASH enables the multi-agency team to share all appropriate information in a secure environment, and ensure that the most appropriate response is provided to effectively safeguard and protect the individual.

This includes the safeguarding and investigation department, which brings together staff responsible for safeguarding victims with those who carry out specialist investigations into crimes against vulnerable victims, the combined child sexual exploitation and missing persons' investigation unit, and the safer schools partnership (SSP). This partnership aims to prioritise higher-risk schools across the county, to prevent children from becoming victims of crime by providing education and awareness about developing healthy relationships, staying safe online, and the dangers of sexting.

## **How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?<sup>4</sup>**

Cambridgeshire Constabulary generally responds well to vulnerable victims. It has clear and well understood systems in place to ensure that the police response to the nature of the victim's vulnerability is appropriate, and reflects the victim's needs. Safeguarding is properly considered from the point of the initial report and throughout the investigation. The person answering the call offers immediate and practical safeguarding advice, and frontline staff have a checklist that they can use to find ways to keep people safe. However, the constabulary should do more to support vulnerable people with mental health issues and take more positive action when dealing with domestic abuse offenders in order to prevent reoffending and protect victims.

The new THRIVE model is intended to ensure that the response to vulnerability across all areas of policing improves. Currently, Cambridgeshire is implementing this model and should continue to focus on this to ensure that the initiative translates into a consistent, high quality operational practice.

### **Response officers**

Cambridgeshire Constabulary officers who respond to vulnerable people are generally knowledgeable and skilled in dealing with their needs. Officers demonstrate a good understanding of how they would identify individuals with health and/or social care needs. There are referral processes in place for both children and adults that are well understood by staff and, in those incidents reviewed by HMIC, we found that these issues were identified and addressed appropriately.

When attending domestic abuse incidents officers are provided with a booklet which contains details for victims of where to access specialist support services, the victim's police reference number, the officers' contact information, and the result of

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<sup>4</sup> The question within the PEEL inspection methodology asks "How well does the force respond to vulnerable victims?" HMIC has amended the heading in this report to make it clear to the reader that this section focuses on the initial response to vulnerable victims, rather than the overall police response to vulnerable victims.

the risk assessment. This ensures that the victim understands what action has been taken by the officer to keep them safe and where they might go for additional support.

Response officers generally have a good understanding of their responsibilities in relation to keeping victims safe. These include examples of re-housing a victim in a local hotel and providing a victim with an emergency mobile phone in cases where the victim's own phone had been seized for evidential reasons. Officers also know where to go for specialist advice in relation to other types of incidents such as child sexual exploitation.

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

Supervisors play an active role in checking and approving officers' risk assessments and their response to vulnerable victims. Supervisors are notified by the control room of all new incidents of domestic abuse and then check both the risk assessment undertaken by the response officer and the quality of the investigation. If a victim is assessed as high risk, then the case is supervised by an inspector and the incident cannot be closed without his/her authority.

## **How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners keep victims safe?<sup>5</sup>**

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has invested to improve the investigation of crimes against vulnerable people and how they are kept safe. However, HMIC found that this is an area where further improvement is needed to improve its service to the public.

The constabulary has a single public protection department bringing together staff responsible for safeguarding victims and those who carry out specialist investigations into crimes against them. The new head of public protection is reviewing individual functions within the department to improve the service to vulnerable victims. HMIC is keen to see progress in the areas for improvement that are highlighted in this report.

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

HMIC reviewed 40 investigations,<sup>6</sup> of which 5 involved a vulnerable person. Generally staff with the right investigative skills are allocated to cases involving a vulnerable person in a timely manner; the resulting investigations are of an adequate standard, and generally focused on the needs of the victim. However, HMIC found evidence that risk is not always identified and reviewed effectively throughout an investigation. This means that victims are not always receiving the right level of support during the investigation process. The constabulary should ensure that the investigation of crimes, especially those involving vulnerable and young people, is well-supervised so that risk is identified correctly and all opportunities are taken to keep them safe.

### **Compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime**

All police forces have a statutory duty to comply with the code of practice for victims of crime. The code sets out the service that victims of crime can expect from all organisations, including the police that have a role in the criminal justice system.

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<sup>5</sup> The question within the PEEL inspection methodology asks “How well does the subsequent police action and work with partners keep victims safe?” HMIC has amended the heading in this report to make it clear to the reader that this section focuses on the investigation of offences involving vulnerable victims, rather than the police’s initial response to vulnerable victims.

<sup>6</sup> HMIC reviewed a sample of rape, burglary, offences of serious violence and actual bodily harm cases. In most forces the review consisted of 10 cases from each crime category but in some larger forces the sample was increased to 15. The file review was designed to provide a broad overview of the identification of vulnerability and the effectiveness of the investigation.

Not all victims of crime in Cambridgeshire are being offered the opportunity to make a victim personal statement (VPS)<sup>7</sup> at the appropriate time, explaining how the crime has affected them, as set out in the code of practice. This is a victim's right, can add weight to prosecution evidence and help both to secure a successful outcome and make it clear to the offender the consequences and gravity of their behaviour. The constabulary should make sure this is explained and offered consistently, and in good time.

The constabulary is generally good at identifying victims of crime; assessing their vulnerability and providing support that meet victim's rights under the code. HMIC is impressed by the constabulary's development of a victim's hub. This is a specialist unit comprising of victim care co-ordinators who ensure that all victims of crime receive an initial victim's needs assessment. On occasions, this includes a more detailed needs assessment involving a home visit. The hub includes trained volunteers who provide longer term support. This approach provides an effective way to identify the nature of the victim's vulnerability and support them (where applicable) through the criminal justice process.

### **Working with partners**

The constabulary works effectively with a range of different organisations in order to protect those who are vulnerable and to support victims. This work is focused on the multi-agency safeguarding hub, where local services such as health, education and social services work alongside the police in the same building and share information about vulnerable people, so that risk can be better identified and comprehensive and co-ordinated joint plans put in place to keep them safe.

### **Multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH)**

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has an established an effective MASH which brings principal professionals together to ensure information is shared, analysis takes place and decisions made to safeguard children and vulnerable adults as quickly as possible. The duty team within the MASH provides immediate and appropriate safeguarding advice to frontline officers to protect vulnerable victims. The MASH is effective in identifying and addressing the needs of vulnerable victims. It has robust systems to ensure that risk and a vulnerability assessment are used to keep victims safe, and keeps these assessments under review. Specialists within the MASH provide immediate and long-term safeguarding to protect victims as required. The MASH also provides safeguarding advice to the wider constabulary. The

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<sup>7</sup> The victim personal statement (VPS) gives victims an opportunity to describe the wider effects of the crime upon them, express their concerns and indicate whether or not they require support. Provisions relating to the making of a VPS and its use in criminal proceedings are included in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims Code), which was published on 29 October 2013 and came into force on 10 December 2013.

constabulary shares information with other statutory partners effectively and develops joint safeguarding plans to keep victims safe.

However, the range of different specialist teams dealing with a victim means there is a risk that the service is not as streamlined as it needs to be. For example, a case of domestic abuse could be referred to the MASH to enable multi-agency work, while the investigation and victim safeguarding will be dealt with by the constabulary's domestic abuse investigation and safeguarding unit (DAISU) and the victim's needs met by the independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) service. HMIC found that there is sometimes a delay in communication between units and duplication of activity. In particular, it can be sometimes unclear who is the contact for the victim and may cause the victim some confusion. Cambridgeshire Constabulary should ensure that, given the increased demand on police and partners, there are clear and efficient processes in place to ensure that victims receive a good service.

There is also a range of positive work with partner organisations taking place outside the MASH. The constabulary is able to refer vulnerable victims to independent domestic abuse and sexual assault advisors, and works closely with the voluntary sector to support and safeguard vulnerable victims. Police officers work with schools to help educate young people about the risks of child sexual exploitation and to spot those who might be at risk. It also has productive partnerships with voluntary organisations such as Barnardo's to support and safeguard vulnerable children.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary actively participates in multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)<sup>8</sup> with professionals from other bodies in order to safeguard those considered to be at the highest risk of harm. As part of the inspection, HMIC observed a conference and found good participation by those present with clear evidence that the MARAC was effectively safeguarding victims and children through information sharing and joint action planning. The constabulary has responded positively to concerns among partners in relation to the current MARAC model and the problem of increasing workload from greater numbers of referrals and has commissioned a review to identify areas where improvements can be made.

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<sup>8</sup> MARACs (multi-agency risk assessment conferences) – local meetings where information about high-risk domestic abuse victims (those at risk of murder or serious harm) is shared between local agencies.



## **How well does the force respond to and safeguard specific vulnerable groups (missing and absent & victims of domestic abuse), and how well prepared is it to tackle child sexual exploitation?**

The first three questions have explained how Cambridgeshire Constabulary identifies those that are vulnerable, the response that is provided to them and what action the constabulary takes to investigate crimes and to work with partners to keep victims safe. This question looks specifically at how Cambridgeshire Constabulary deals with three specific areas of vulnerability: domestic abuse, missing and absent children and its preparedness to deal with child sexual exploitation.

### **Missing and absent children**

The constabulary reviewed its approach to how it deals with missing and absent children in March 2015 and has improved the way it manages the risks to children. Since May 2015, all children and young people are categorised as missing and not absent.<sup>9</sup> This ensures that any report of a child going missing receives immediate investigation. A missing child always triggers an immediate investigation, whereas an absent child may be given several hours to return home before any investigation begins. This means that a police investigation begins immediately and, even if the child returns home after a very short period of time, full enquiries are made to understand why the child went missing and to assess whether the child is at risk.

Officers and staff understand who has responsibility for the investigation of missing children and there is a clear review and escalation process in place. The missing person unit (MPU) includes dedicated staff who are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and work closely with partner organisations and frontline staff to ensure that appropriate action is taken to locate and safeguard missing children. The impact of categorising all children as missing has increased the workload for the MPU team and the constabulary should review staffing in this unit to ensure partnership working and safeguarding activity continue to be effective.

Non-specialist, neighbourhood officers and staff are not working sufficiently closely with care homes in their areas, using the MPU as the main point of contact for missing and absent children issues. This means that the constabulary is missing opportunities to work with care homes to protect children who regularly go missing and who may be at risk, for example, of sexual exploitation. While information and intelligence is shared via the constabulary briefing system, better local engagement

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<sup>9</sup> A person is classified as absent if they are not where they are expected to be but they are not considered at risk. Whereas, if they are classified as missing the police are obliged to take steps to locate them, as the level of perceived risk is higher.

would improve the gathering of intelligence and lead to further improvements in safeguarding of vulnerable children.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary is part of effective partnerships to respond to and safeguard missing children. Specialist staff who work within the MASH, local children's services and the MPU assist in the management of children identified as being at risk and develop a safeguarding plan. The constabulary also works well with the voluntary sector to help safeguard missing children. In the Peterborough area, representatives of Barnardo's speak to children upon their return home to gain a better understanding of the reason for their absence, and to assess any risk of child sexual exploitation.

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

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has made a good start in ensuring that it is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation. This inspection has focused on actions and activities the constabulary has taken to understand and identify the extent to which children are at risk of child sexual exploitation and the policies, practices and procedures it is putting in place to tackle it. It did not test the quality of how the constabulary conducted these complex investigations with other agencies such as children's services as these issues are covered in HMIC's rolling programme of child protection inspections.<sup>10</sup>

The constabulary demonstrates strong leadership in preparing its response to child sexual exploitation. Tackling child sexual exploitation is a constabulary priority and we found a number of specific police operations to tackle the problem including a proactive approach to gathering intelligence on vulnerable young girls at risk in the Fenland area. The constabulary's analysis of the scale and nature of child sexual exploitation across the constabulary area was further updated in March 2015. However, the constabulary would benefit from including more data from partner organisations in this analysis to improve its understanding.

The constabulary has provided training for staff using the national e-learning package, video briefings and face-to-face scenario-based training, together with the provision of a comprehensive pocket guide for frontline staff. The guide provides officers and staff with information to support them in identifying child sexual exploitation and ensuring that the right action is taken at the first point of contact with the victim.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary has existing safeguarding procedures in place to support children at risk of child sexual exploitation. The maturity of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) means that the constabulary is able quickly to share

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<sup>10</sup> HMIC's National Child Protection Inspection reports are available from: [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/)

information between other organisations to enable better joint responses and contribution to effective safeguarding measures.

The constabulary has worked constructively with partner organisations to raise awareness and develop joint approaches. This has been strengthened by the experience and learning from child sexual exploitation special operations, together with the combined missing and child sexual exploitation team co-located with partners and a joint child sexual exploitation constabulary and partnership action plan. Operation Makesafe is an initiative currently underway where the police and partner organisations are proactively sharing intelligence on potential victims and perpetrators suspected of child sexual exploitation. It includes local organisations providing services for young people, for example in Peterborough where ten girls have been identified as vulnerable to child sexual exploitation. There are strong links with schools and the constabulary has recently reviewed the level of police engagement against the risk of child sexual exploitation. This has led to joint police and partner organisations having a targeted approach to working with schools and customised work with children who are identified as potential victims of child sexual exploitation.

### **Domestic abuse**

Although domestic abuse does not feature as an explicit threat on the constabulary's control strategy, which identifies the forces highest risks, it is clearly a priority for the constabulary and it has made good progress in its action plan to improve this area of work following the HMIC domestic abuse inspection in 2014. For example, the constabulary has created a new domestic abuse action group, which aims to improve services to victims. The constabulary should ensure that the focus on improving the service to domestic abuse victims continues.

There are good examples of multi-agency work and partner organisations are positive about the constabulary's improvements over the past 12 months. However, arrest rates of domestic abuse perpetrators are falling and the constabulary does not yet understand why this is happening.

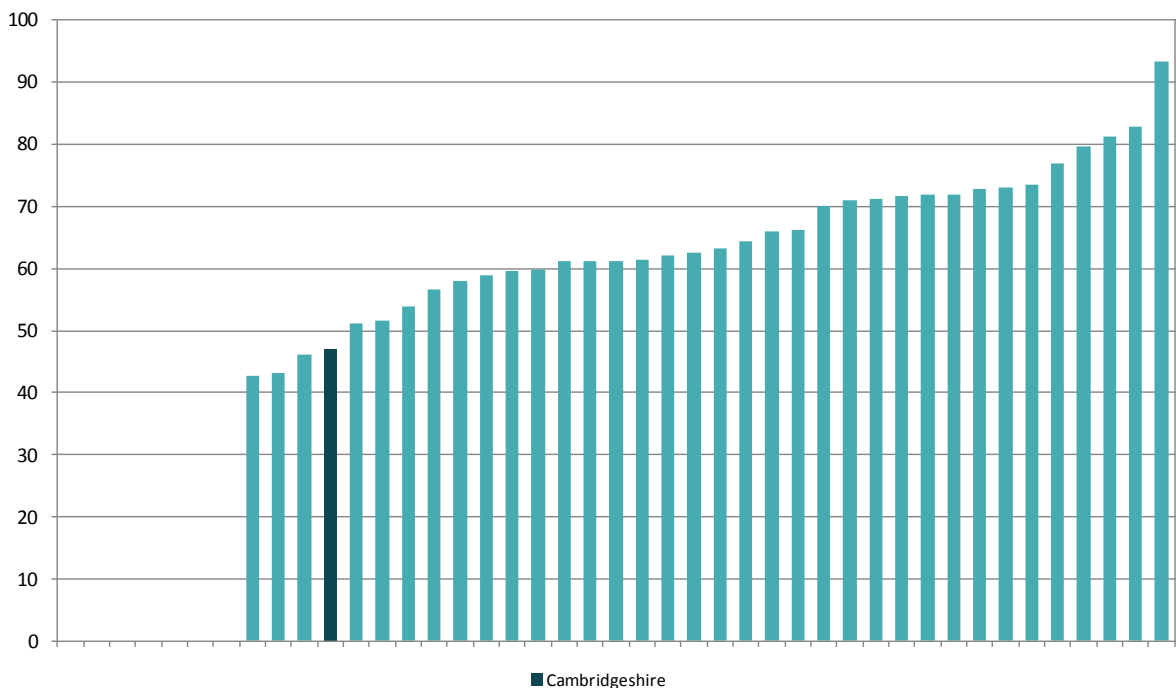
HMIC is concerned that the constabulary may not be consistently dealing with domestic abuse offenders in the most appropriate way, to prevent reoffending and protect victims. During the inspection we found examples of domestic abuse incidents where the practice of allowing voluntary attendance at a police station was used to deal with the perpetrator and we identified two separate incidents where the victim was aggrieved that no arrest had been made. In two further cases, a non-molestation order was in place which gave the police an automatic power of arrest, but the offenders were only required to attend voluntarily at a police station. This means there is a risk that the constabulary is seen by both victims and perpetrators to be not taking seriously domestic abuse and breaches of non-molestation orders. This is likely to lead to victims being both placed at greater risk and losing confidence in the police.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary should review its approach to the use of voluntary attendance to deal with perpetrators, to ensure that victim safeguarding is the priority and that victim confidence to report domestic abuse is not undermined.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 23 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 9 percent of all police recorded crime. Across England and Wales during the same period there was a 21 percent increase, with domestic abuse accounting for 10 percent of all police recorded crime.

As shown in figure 2, for every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded Cambridgeshire Constabulary made 47 arrests.

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



**Source: HMIC data return**

HMIC reviewed 14 domestic abuse files, and found an adequate standard of investigation centred on the victim and in the majority, but not all, of the cases appropriate safeguarding support was provided.

In September 2015, Cambridgeshire Constabulary planned to introduce a pilot scheme in Huntingdon and Cambridge to include the management of high risk domestic abuse perpetrators within their current integrated offender management programme. This means that additional measures will be taken to identify and work with repeat and serial domestic abuse offenders who pose the greatest risk to prevent them from reoffending.

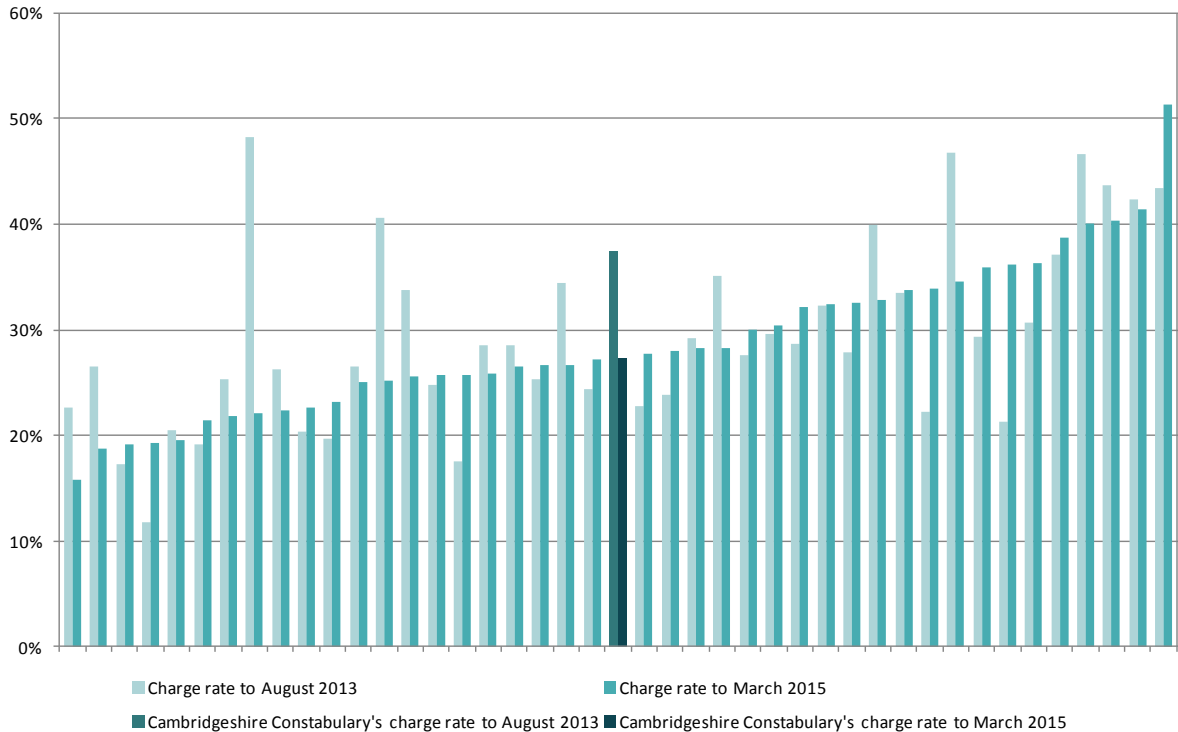
Cambridgeshire Constabulary provides body-worn video cameras to officers to capture video evidence at initial attendance. However, using these cameras is not mandated by the force for use in incidents of domestic abuse – they are used at the discretion of the attending officer. Such evidence has been shown to provide compelling evidence in a subsequent prosecution. It can often result in an early guilty plea or in some cases mean that a reluctant victim does not need to face their abuser and give evidence in court to secure a successful prosecution.

The constabulary’s charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 27 percent, compared with 27 percent for England and Wales.

This is a decrease since HMIC’s domestic abuse inspection in 2014 when the constabulary rate was 37 percent for the 12 months to 31 August 2013, compared with 30 percent for England and Wales.

The drop of 10 percent in the constabulary’s charge rate compared to the same period in 2014, while in line with the England and Wales average, means that the constabulary may be missing opportunities to improve outcomes for victims of domestic abuse.

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



Source: HMIC data return

HMIC also examined the constabulary's use of new legal powers to protect victims. Domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) were introduced in England and Wales in 2014 to prevent a suspected offender from returning to a victim's home or contacting the victim. The constabulary began using DVPOs in July 2014; it made five applications to magistrates' courts for their use, of which four were granted. Two DVPOs have been breached. Breaches occur when the offender fails to comply with the condition of the order and is taken back before the magistrates' court. This represents a DVPO breach rate of 50 percent compared with the England and Wales rate of 17 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Cambridgeshire Constabulary's use of domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs)<sup>12</sup> and DVPOs is low. HMIC is concerned that the constabulary is not doing all it can to use its powers available to safeguard vulnerable victims.

HMIC found that frontline staff and supervisors are aware of the immediate options available to keep victims safe and where to obtain specialist advice. Longer-term safeguarding issues and support are managed through the domestic abuse safeguarding team, which has access to independent domestic violence advisors, who provide additional support to victims. HMIC identified good evidence of joint safeguarding activity to support vulnerable victims of domestic abuse, even when the victim was reluctant to engage with the police. However, we found that the capacity within the domestic abuse investigation unit was limited and overstretched. It is dealing with all low to high risk investigations which means that staff are unable to cope with the volume of work adequately. Some staff working in the unit on a short-term secondment have not received any recent domestic abuse training.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary needs to review the terms of reference, capacity and capability of the unit to ensure that it can provide the best service to vulnerable victims.

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<sup>11</sup> The England and Wales figure is based on data provided by 35 forces.

<sup>12</sup> DVPNs (domestic violence prevention notices) may be issued by an authorised police officer to prevent a suspected perpetrator from returning to a victim's home and/or contacting the victim. Following the issue of the DVPN the police must apply to the magistrates for a domestic violence prevention order (DVPO). The DVPO will be granted for a period of up to 28 days.

## Summary of findings



**Requires improvement**

Cambridgeshire Constabulary generally provides a good service in identifying vulnerable people and responds well to them. However, in some areas improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent and that vulnerable people are protected from harm and kept safe.

Protecting vulnerable people is a priority for the constabulary, and staff understand and share this commitment. The constabulary has invested additional resource in specialist teams to safeguard vulnerable victims, such as domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation victims and missing children. However, the specialist resources are limited and workloads are outstripping the capacity to provide a consistently good response.

We found improvements since last year in dealing with domestic abuse and missing children cases, although there is still room for improvement. Officers attending domestic abuse incidents work well to assess risk and protect victims. However, HMIC is concerned that a lack of positive action, use of police powers and an inconsistent approach to the collection of evidence, is putting vulnerable victims at risk and is undermining their confidence in the police to keep them safe.

The constabulary has made a good start in ensuring that it is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation and must now build on this initial approach with its partners.

## **Causes of concern**

The constabulary's response to the investigation and safeguarding of domestic abuse victims is a cause of concern to the HMIC. The force may not be consistently dealing with domestic abuse offenders in the most appropriate way, to prevent reoffending and protect victims.

The constabulary provides body-worn video cameras to officers, however, these are not mandated specifically for use at domestic abuse incidents and using them is at the discretion of the attending officer. This could lead to missed opportunities for securing valuable evidence. The constabulary is not arresting offenders when it could, specifically in relation to its decision to use voluntary attendance at police stations for suspects of domestic abuse and in relation to breaches of orders where there were powers of arrest available. HMIC found instances where such approaches had led victims to have a loss of confidence in police.

HMIC also found that the capacity within the domestic abuse investigation unit was limited and overstretched. The unit is dealing with all low to high-risk investigations which means that staff are unable to cope with the volume of work adequately. Some staff working in the unit on a short-term secondment have not received any domestic abuse training recently. There appears to be an underuse of domestic violence protection orders as a means of safeguarding victims where a prosecution was not taking place.

## **Recommendation**

To address this cause of concern, HMIC recommends the constabulary should immediately take steps to improve its response in the following areas:

- the use of body-worn video cameras by officers attending incidents of domestic abuse;
- the use of voluntary attendance at police stations for perpetrators of domestic abuse and in cases of breaches of orders;
- the use of domestic violence protection orders to safeguard victims; and
- the capacity within the domestic abuse investigation unit to provide an effective service.

## **Areas for improvement**

- The constabulary should improve its compliance with its duties under the code of practice for victims of crime specifically in relation to victim personal statements.