

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of Cumbria Constabulary



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Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Cumbria Constabulary

597

England and Wales

350

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

Cumbria Constabulary

14.2

England and Wales

15.8



Crime

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

Cumbria Constabulary

49.9

England and Wales

61.6

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

Cumbria Constabulary

+3.5%

England and Wales

+2.2%

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

Cumbria Constabulary

11.6%

England and Wales

10.7%

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

Cumbria Constabulary

12.8%

England and Wales

10.0%

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

Cumbria Constabulary

+21.4%

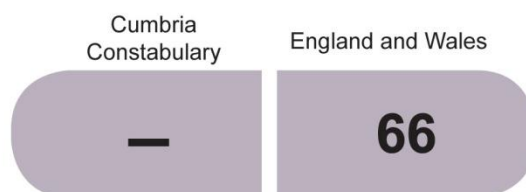
England and Wales

+20.8%



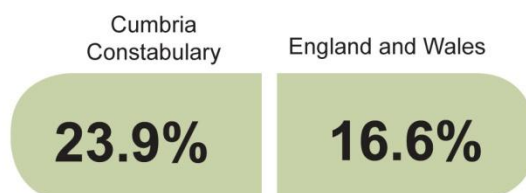
Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

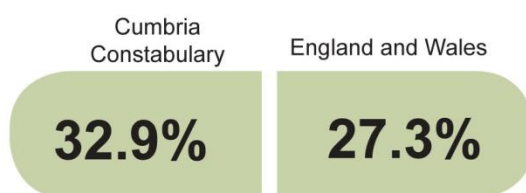


Charge rate

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

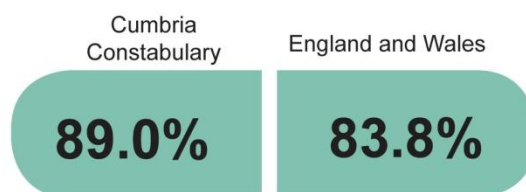


Domestic abuse charge rate as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015



***Cumbria Constabulary was not able to provide data for the number of domestic abuse arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes.**

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 Cumbria Constabulary.

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

Summary



Requires improvement

Cumbria Constabulary meets the requirements of some vulnerable groups better than others. The constabulary responds well to the needs of people who are vulnerable because of domestic abuse but it needs to improve its understanding of the risks presented to young people when they go missing and through child sexual exploitation. There are several areas where improvement is needed to ensure the service is consistent and that vulnerable people, particularly children, are kept safe. Given the scale of the challenge and the risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall, HMIC judges that the constabulary requires improvement.

In general, the constabulary identifies and responds to vulnerable victims well. However, we saw a few cases when vulnerability appeared not to have been adequately considered by call handlers and by officers responding to incidents. This was particularly so for victims of more serious assaults. The constabulary needs to ensure that all officers and staff have fully understood the training which they have previously been given to enable them to respond sensitively to the needs of vulnerable people requiring their service.

The constabulary investigates well crime committed against the most vulnerable victims. The right level of expertise is involved according to the complexity of each investigation. Work between professionals in the children's safeguarding hub is good and the safety of children is prioritised. However, the capacity to assess and manage referrals as quickly as they should be is limited. The constabulary needs to ensure that it deals with existing backlogs and manages future submissions better.

The constabulary works well with a number of different organisations in order to protect those who are vulnerable and support victims. However, some of the arrangements are not yet fully effective, particularly in relation to sharing and management of information, which could be improved.

Structured and well-supervised processes are in place for responding when children are reported missing. However, the collection and management of intelligence from vulnerable missing people can be improved as it is not being recorded on the constabulary's computer systems.

The constabulary is well prepared to respond to child sexual exploitation on an individual, case-by-case basis, once a victim has been identified, but needs to do much more to understand the nature and context of child sexual exploitation across the county. This inspection only considered how well-prepared the constabulary is to tackle child sexual exploitation.

We found that those officers attending domestic abuse incidents had a sound knowledge of how to assess risk and take steps to keep victims safe. While frontline staff and supervisors are not always aware of the immediate options available to keep the victim safe and where they can obtain specialist advice, longer-term safeguarding issues and specialist support are good.

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

HMIC found that Cumbria Constabulary identifies vulnerable people at an early stage and that it sees keeping victims safe as officers' most important responsibility. We found a strong commitment to improving the current service provided to vulnerable people, particularly in relation to domestic abuse and sexual violence. This is listed as a priority within the police and crime commissioner's Police and Crime Plan for Cumbria 2013-2017.¹

The constabulary has already taken steps to develop arrangements with partners to improve how information in relation to vulnerable people can be shared. However, the constabulary needs to improve significantly its understanding of the risks presented to young people when they go missing and through child sexual exploitation.

Identifying those who are vulnerable

In Cumbria Constabulary we found that control room staff deal with callers well.

Forces define vulnerability in different ways. The majority of forces use either the definition from the government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime² or that referred to in ACPO guidance.³ Nine forces use their own definition or a combination of these definitions.

Cumbria uses the definition from the ACPO guidance and defines a vulnerable adult as:

“Any person aged 18 years or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental, physical, or learning disability, age or illness AND is or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.”

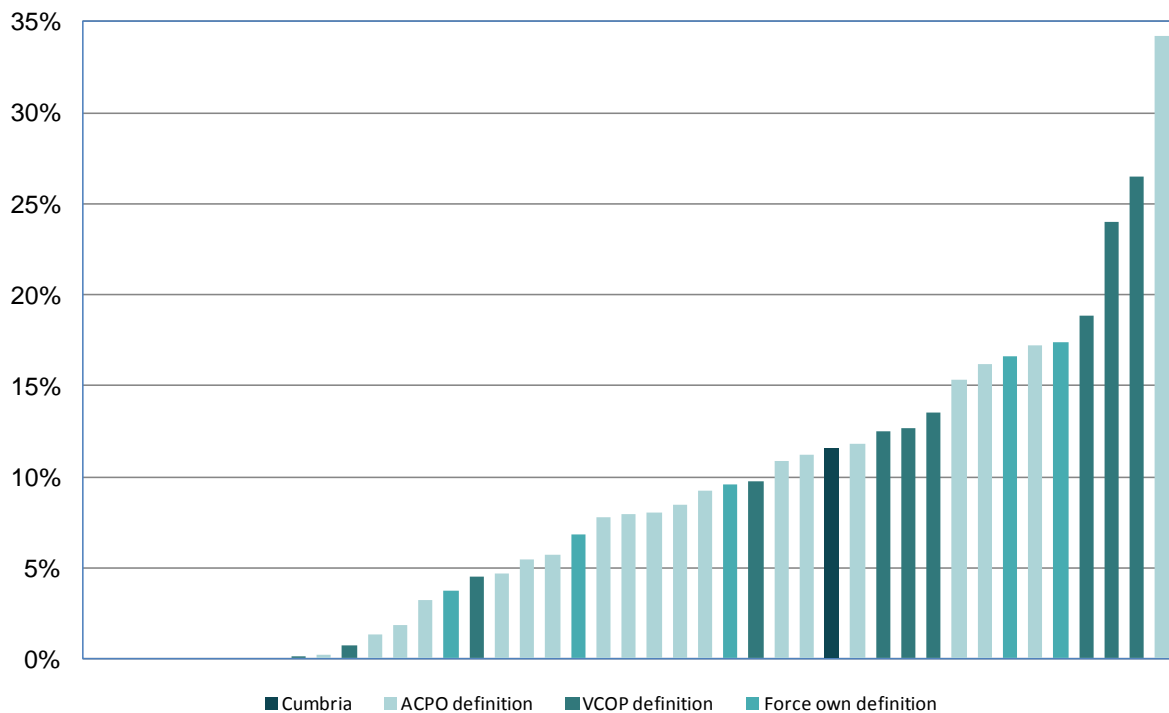
¹ *Making Cumbria an even safer place – A Police and Crime Plan for Cumbria 2013-2017 (Revised 2015)*, Cumbria police and crime commissioner, March 2015. Available from www.cumbria-pcc.gov.uk/media/34395/Police%20and%20Crime%20Plan%20refresh%202015%20final%20version%20for%20website.pdf

² *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

³ 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. Available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/vulnerable-adults/

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, 11.6 percent of all recorded crimes in Cumbria 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.

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

Control room call-takers display a positive attitude and deal with callers in a calm, reassuring and professional manner. We listened to 18 recorded calls to the Cumbria control room made by members of the public seeking assistance. In each case call takers were calm, sympathetic and professional. Generally, control room call-handlers identify vulnerability well when dealing with calls made to the constabulary.

The command and control system used by the constabulary to record incidents does not automatically identify previous callers who are known to be vulnerable. Call-handlers are required to search the system to identify previous reports involving callers. They have to look more broadly across a number of other available systems to extract information on callers. We found that this is being done routinely.

We found examples in the control room of automatic notification alerts being placed on the command and control system to assist in deployment decisions. These alerts prompt the deployment of officers wearing body-worn video cameras to those locations where vulnerability was known to be a factor or where officer safety was a consideration. In addition, this feature means that staff can place information on the command and control system providing specific information about a location which is then available for future calls to that location.

A good system of support is in place in the control room, with additional call-handlers assisting their colleagues taking calls. These extra staff search a broad range of constabulary systems while the person dealing with the caller is deploying officers to incidents. This allows control room staff to update patrol officers attending an incident with all the relevant information known to the police, to inform their understanding of any potential vulnerability.

We visited a number of front enquiry offices in police stations across the constabulary. We found that the front enquiry officers, who deal with callers, had not received any training on identifying and managing those vulnerable victims that might call into police stations. While we were reassured by the practical and sympathetic approach that was taken by the front office staff we interviewed, the front offices at Barrow, Whitehaven and Windermere did not offer an environment conducive to supporting vulnerable victims or encouraging sensitive disclosures of information. This means that victims who call at some stations to discuss private and confidential issues cannot be sure of speaking to a member of the constabulary who understands their needs, in an environment which affords them some privacy.

Assessing levels of risk and need

The constabulary generally conducts well its initial assessments of risk. Overall, the constabulary is generally good at identifying vulnerability effectively at an early stage and we found clear evidence that staff follow-up all investigative opportunities in a timely fashion. However, we saw a few cases when vulnerability appeared not to have been adequately considered by call-handlers and by officers responding to incidents. This was particularly so for victims of more serious assaults.

Control room staff are expected to complete distance learning packages on identifying vulnerability, but progress in completing these self-taught packages is not monitored or evaluated by the constabulary. In practice, staff in the control room ask for advice from colleagues or search online if guidance is needed. Training on the national decision model⁴ has not been given to control room staff and we found a reliance on email updates to advise control room staff on changes to policy and practices.

⁴ The national decision model is a risk assessment framework, or decision-making process, that is used by police forces across the country. It provides five different stages that officers can follow when making any type of decision.

Arrangements are in place on each of the territorial policing areas (TPAs) to assess risk and allocate resources to keep victims safe. A senior manager chairs a meeting each morning to consider priorities and evaluate perceived risk to the public. We observed these meetings and found that cases involving vulnerable people are seen as the most important priority. These are allocated the necessary local and constabulary-wide resources to ensure that the constabulary can manage them appropriately.

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

HMIC assessed how Cumbria Constabulary's subsequent provision of services meets the victim's needs. We found that the constabulary meets the requirements of some vulnerable groups better than others.

The constabulary responds well to the needs of people who are vulnerable because of domestic abuse. Cumbria Constabulary's approach relies strongly on an early response and good assessment of risk. This is supported by the constabulary's expectation that positive action will be taken to reduce the prospect of harm against any vulnerable victim, followed by the appropriate provision of support. We found that the constabulary expects to arrest identified offenders as soon as possible. The constabulary has well-established mature partner arrangements around domestic abuse which involve local county-wide agencies and the voluntary sector appropriately in the response to keeping vulnerable people safe over the longer term.

The constabulary's understanding of and response to the needs of missing and absent people is less well-established. Cumbria needs to improve its co-ordination of resources to gather intelligence and also oversight of the constabulary's response to managing missing from home cases.

HMIC was concerned at how the missing from home and intelligence system is updated by officers. The constabulary needs to improve how it collects and records information to inform its understanding of what happens to vulnerable young people during periods of absence.

The constabulary is still developing its approach to tackling child sexual exploitation, and has recently completed a constabulary-wide intelligence assessment to inform its understanding of child sexual exploitation across the county. However, there is room for improvement in how the constabulary collects information to understand child sexual exploitation.

The constabulary has invested in additional staff to protect vulnerable people and to give them the support they need. In order to ensure that cases involving vulnerable people are investigated properly by the most experienced officers, the constabulary has increased the number of officers in the public protection units in each TPA.

How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?⁵

Cumbria Constabulary responds well to vulnerable victims, with well-understood systems in place enabling good access to supervisors and specialists to inform an appropriate response. The constabulary intends to improve the police response to managing incidents more effectively at the point of contact by deploying more experienced police officers into the control room from September 2015. The constabulary intends to increase the level of practical experience in the process of the deployment of resources, improve the understanding of vulnerability among control room staff and enhance the service delivered to the public.

When officers attend incidents, we found that they appreciate what initial action they should take to protect vulnerable people. Officers must complete risk assessments in relation to any vulnerable person identified at an incident. The constabulary has also provided officers with a guidance booklet outlining their responsibilities when attending domestic abuse incidents and carrying out initial investigations.

The constabulary revised the way it responds to missing from home reports to ensure each call, regardless of the circumstances, received an appropriate response. In January 2015, the constabulary amended its policy to remove an approach that allowed some missing children reports to be dealt with as absent⁶ cases. This meant that officers would be sent to every report of a child being absent from where they are supposed to be, even if the person reporting them as missing had no concerns that the young person was at risk.

Officers told us that they are spending a lot of time attending incidents where young people are late home, but still have been reported as absent by carers. Responding to absent reports in this way is not the most effective use of resources. The constabulary should improve its understanding of risk in relation to cases involving absent young people to enable resources to be used more efficiently. This should ensure the constabulary places a greater emphasis on those cases where the young person is missing rather than absent.

⁵ The question within the PEEL inspection methodology asks “How well does the force respond to vulnerable victims?” HMIC has amended the heading in this report to make it clear to the reader that this section focuses on the initial police response to vulnerable victims, rather than the overall police response to vulnerable victims.

⁶ A person is classified as absent if they are not where they are expected to be but they are not considered to be at risk. Whereas, if they classified as missing the police are obliged to take steps to locate them, as the level of perceived risk is higher.

Response officers

HMIC found that the police officers who respond to vulnerable people are sympathetic and understand that safeguarding them is the key priority. We found however that the default safeguarding position taken by response officers at incidents of domestic abuse is to arrest the perpetrator. Some frontline staff are not fully aware of wider safeguarding options that are available to support victims (such as domestic violence protection notices,⁷ local places of safety provision, additional security measures and counselling support). This means that officers responding to victims' emergency calls cannot inform victims properly and at the earliest opportunity of all the different safeguarding measures that could be taken to protect them and keep them safe. However, most officers we interviewed understood that more in-depth safeguarding advice would be provided during a follow-up visit by a community safety officer.

Although the constabulary has provided training for frontline officers on understanding and managing vulnerability, the courses have mainly been through mandatory e-learning or distance-learning packages. This training was not well-regarded by any of the officers we spoke to. They felt that the training that had been provided was not sufficient. We found exceptions where quality training had been developed locally in TPAs. Officers spoke positively about bespoke training around identifying child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse that was being provided in some TPAs by local practitioners experienced in protecting vulnerable people. However, not all staff in the constabulary receive this bespoke training.

We found that officers complete domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence (DASH) risk assessments⁸ inconsistently. The constabulary has provided no formal training, beyond on-line training packages, to officers on how risk should be evaluated and recorded. This means that the written assessment is based on each officer's personal judgment and experience. Additionally, these assessments are automatically forwarded to a central team at the safeguarding hub for consideration, without being checked by the officer's line manager first. This means that the constabulary cannot be certain that officers are accurately assessing the risk to vulnerable people.

⁷ Domestic violence prevention notices (DVPNs) 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.

⁸ Most forces use the domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence risk identification, assessment and management model (DASH): www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/domestic-abuse/risk-and-vulnerability/#approaches-to-risk-assessment

Domestic abuse cases assessed at standard-risk are managed by the initial attending officer, who is then also responsible for the continuing safety of any vulnerable person at an incident. Cases deemed as being medium or high-risk are referred to the public protection unit where an enhanced service is provided by more experienced officers.

We found that many officers commented to us about the absence of good training on how to handle vulnerability, domestic abuse (beyond the online training for risk assessment) and child sexual exploitation. We are concerned that, even when time was set aside in the shift pattern for response officers, this training time was not being exploited fully. This time should be used well so that officers attending incidents have strengthened their knowledge of vulnerability issues.

Supervision of the response to vulnerable victims

Supervision, when it happens, is effective and appropriate. We found that response constables seek advice and guidance from supervisors and specialists in relation to domestic abuse, missing from home and child sexual exploitation cases. Officers confirmed that supervisors are likely to attend high-risk domestic abuse incidents. In other more complex cases, constables seek guidance from the public protection unit (PPU) staff when attending scenes or take advice from on-call detectives during overnight incidents.

How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners to keep victims safe?⁹

The constabulary works well with partners to keep people safe. The work done by the PPUs with victims is regarded highly by partner agencies. Relations with the partner agencies supporting vulnerable people are well-established and positive. Despite the fact that each PPU had its full establishment of staff, there is a perception from some partners that capacity in the PPUs to support partnership work is diminishing. This was perceived by partners to affect adversely the PPUs' ability to support strategy meetings and to make progress with crime investigations as quickly as possible. However, this view did not undermine the high regard in which the constabulary PPUs are held by partners.

⁹ The question within the PEEL inspection methodology asks "How well does the subsequent police action and work with partners keep people 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.

Investigation of crimes involving vulnerable people

HMIC reviewed 40 investigations,¹⁰ of which 17 were identified as involving a vulnerable person. We found that the right staff with the right skills had been allocated quickly to these cases and that investigations carried out into crimes were well conducted. We saw that officers were allowed time to fully investigate crimes reported to the constabulary. All the cases reviewed were of a good investigative standard, with all necessary lines of enquiry being followed and supervised appropriately.

Compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime

All police forces have a statutory duty to comply with the code of practice for victims of crime, which sets out the service victims of crime can expect from all parts of the criminal justice system. The code states that all victims of crime should be able to make a personal statement,¹¹ which they can use to explain how the crime has affected them. However, HMIC found that not all victims in Cumbria were offered this opportunity at the appropriate time. The constabulary needs to make sure this is explained and offered consistently, and in good time.

We found that the constabulary keeps victims updated about the progress of their case well. This is important, particularly in those cases where the constabulary decides to take no further action against a suspect. If the constabulary does not tell victims when this decision is made, it means the victim does not have important information about someone who may pose a risk to them and this reduces his or her confidence in the police.

Working with partners

The constabulary works well with a number of different organisations in order to protect those who are vulnerable and support victims. The constabulary has established a children's safeguarding hub (MASH)¹² located at Penrith and covering

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ The victim personal statement (VPS) gives victims an opportunity to describe the wider effects of the crime upon them, express their concerns and indicate whether or not they require any support. Provisions relating to the making of a VPS and its use in criminal proceedings are included in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (Victims' Code), which was published on 29 October 2013 and came into force on 10 December 2013.

¹² 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.

the whole county, where police officers and staff work alongside colleagues from children's social services and the health service. Here they are able to share information easily about vulnerable people, so that risk can be identified better and comprehensive and co-ordinated plans put in place to keep them safe.

The safeguarding hub is effective at identifying and transferring information on vulnerable children between the agencies. Good initial oversight arrangements are in place to assess the risk presented to vulnerable children and to co-ordinate an appropriate partnership response. All risk assessment referrals completed by constabulary officers are automatically forwarded each day to a small team of PPU support officers at the safeguarding hub. These officers then evaluate each assessment that is forwarded and share information accordingly.

We found that referrals received from officers concerning vulnerable children are assessed by PPU support officers. Information from these referrals is then shared immediately with other agencies appropriately. The personnel working in the PPU support unit are confident in their ability to evaluate properly the risk assessments received and determine the correct level of risk presented to victims. However, we found that the officers within the unit are not formally trained for their role, but have learned how to perform their role through observing their colleagues and peer-to-peer shadowing.

The capacity in the safeguarding hub to assess properly all referrals received from across the constabulary is limited. The number of submissions received by the unit is beyond what the support officers can manage each day. While all information on vulnerable children was being shared immediately, our inspection found that there was at least a two-week backlog for more thorough evaluations of vulnerable children referrals and reviews of those assessments concerning domestic abuse victims. The constabulary can only be sure that the risk presented to vulnerable victims has been properly assessed once this secondary evaluation has been carried out, and this was not happening within appropriate timescales.

The constabulary's recording of criminal allegations relating to vulnerable victims needs to improve and be more accurate. Potential crimes being reported to the constabulary at the safeguarding hub by partner agencies are not being recorded as crimes but are being forwarded to territorial policing area PPUs for further investigation.¹³ This means that the constabulary does not have an overview of the number and type of allegations made by partner agencies to the police concerning vulnerable children and other vulnerable people.

¹³ The national crime recording standard General Rules (2 of 4) section 3.6 ii – recording without victim confirmation – sets out that allegations of crime reported by professional agencies to police should be recorded as crimes as soon as practicable.

The constabulary should review the current arrangement in place to ensure it complies fully with the national crime recording standard. This is an issue that HMIC has highlighted to the constabulary previously as part of our inspection of crime data integrity.¹⁴

Disclosures made through the domestic violence disclosure scheme¹⁵ (right to know) are considered at the safeguarding hub. A new arrangement is in place to involve partners in the decision-making process through a monthly review meeting. However, this arrangement risks unnecessary delay, consequently increasing potential risk. The constabulary should consider whether this scheme could be managed in a more timely way to allow much earlier disclosures to potential victims to reduce the likelihood of them becoming a victim of crime.

The constabulary works well with partners to keep vulnerable victims of domestic abuse safe. As part of our inspection, HMIC reviewed partnership-working through the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)¹⁶ held each month in north Cumbria. The constabulary has good systems to identify and assess the level of risk presented to high-risk domestic abuse victims. There was good representation from a number of key partner agencies at the meeting, which was chaired by a police manager from the PPU. Each case was properly considered and an appropriate response was identified to keep the most vulnerable domestic abuse victims safe.

As part of a long-term commitment to working with partner agencies to care for victims of crime, a new sexual assault referral centre (SARC) has been commissioned to improve the support available for vulnerable victims. The new facility called the bridgeway is being built in Penrith and should open in December 2015. The constabulary expects that this new service will involve partner agencies from health and advocacy services and will offer significant improvement to the constabulary's provision of physical and emotional support for vulnerable victims.

¹⁴ *Crime data integrity*, HMIC, 2014. Available from www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/crime-data-integrity-cumbria-2014.pdf

¹⁵ The domestic violence disclosure scheme (DVDS) was launched by the Home Office on 8 March 2014. The scheme is more widely known as 'Clare's Law'. The aim of this scheme is to give members of the public a formal mechanism to make enquiries about an individual with whom they are in a relationship or who is in a relationship with someone they know, and there is a concern that the individual may be abusive towards their partner.

¹⁶ MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference) is a local meeting 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 the constabulary identifies those that are vulnerable, the response that is provided to them and what action the force takes to investigate crimes and to work with partners to keep them safe. This question looks specifically at how the 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 needs to improve how it responds to missing and absent children. In particular it needs to improve how it records information and intelligence in relation to such children.

Good arrangements are in place at daily TPA morning meetings to consider cases involving missing people, including vulnerable children. Cases are discussed in depth, with individuals allocated actions to locate each missing person. This means that the constabulary provides strong daily oversight of these cases.

The constabulary has introduced a new multi-agency missing from home oversight meeting to co-ordinate better arrangements for responding to missing people. The group is determining its terms of reference, and roles and responsibilities for each agency involved, to clarify the joint response to dealing with missing people. The constabulary anticipates that it will improve the joint response to missing people by enabling a more cohesive approach that involves more effective sharing of information between agencies through this group.

Police officers who are designated as children and young person officers work with young people who are placing themselves in danger by going missing. We found examples of these officers carrying out planned visits to the homes of children to support carers and parents of those children who were responsible for the child's safety. These officers offer guidance to the young person in the presence of their carer and explain the dangers presented when he or she remained away from home. These meetings are intended to keep vulnerable children safe, support carers in managing troubled young people and raise awareness of the risk of child sexual exploitation.

Officers visit missing children on their return home to establish that they are safe and well. The outcome of each discussion is entered onto the constabulary's missing persons system to finalise each missing person record. In some cases, these entries contained details to inform future investigation plans if the child went missing again. However, information from records is not being converted routinely into intelligence

to ensure that future missing episodes and child sexual exploitation risks could be properly assessed. Data quality on the missing person record system is poor. As a result, important information could not be extracted by analysts to identify trends or lines of enquiry.

From our review of a small number of missing person case files, we found that entries on these records were not timely, did not fully explain the progress of the police activity and in some cases had not been appropriately finalised. This meant that information on the missing person database was insufficient to inform properly the intelligence as to where vulnerable young people had been while they were missing.

Preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation

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

The way in which the constabulary builds its understanding and identifies the extent to which children are at risk of sexual exploitation could be improved. The constabulary is not gathering intelligence effectively from the partner agencies that are carrying out interviews in relation to missing and absent children. Arrangements are in place for external partners to visit young people after they have returned home and to interview them to ensure their wellbeing. However, the constabulary is not monitoring these visits to ensure that victims reported missing to the constabulary are being interviewed by these agencies. The constabulary could not provide information on how many returns were currently outstanding and over how long a period.

We found that officers were not properly recovering information gained from these interviews, or assessing it to inform their overall understanding of what was happening to each young person during the time of his or her absence. The constabulary had identified how this information should be secured but we found that in practice, this was not happening.

As a consequence of complex partner funding arrangements, we also found that some children, who had been placed in care within the county of Cumbria by local authorities outside of Cumbria, were not being interviewed by external partners after they had returned from being missing. As a result, there was a further lack of intelligence that should have been acquired from officer interviews with these children. However, this issue is partly mitigated by the constabulary conducting its own follow-up interviews with every missing child on their return home.

As a result, based on our review of missing person case files and interviews with staff, we found that useful child sexual exploitation intelligence is not being entered onto the missing persons system to enable information to be recovered and assessed to inform the constabulary's understanding of child sexual exploitation. As a consequence, the constabulary's own intelligence assessment of child sexual exploitation is insufficient to inform a detailed and thorough understanding of the risks and vulnerability evident in child sexual exploitation across the county.

The constabulary identifies and addresses concerns relating to those cases of child sexual exploitation that it has identified. It has several well-established meetings to ensure an appropriate response and that a properly-skilled investigator is appointed to safeguard the vulnerable young person.

The constabulary's training of officers in understanding child sexual exploitation has been inconsistent, although we saw some examples of good presentations on the subject provided to operational officers in some TPAs.

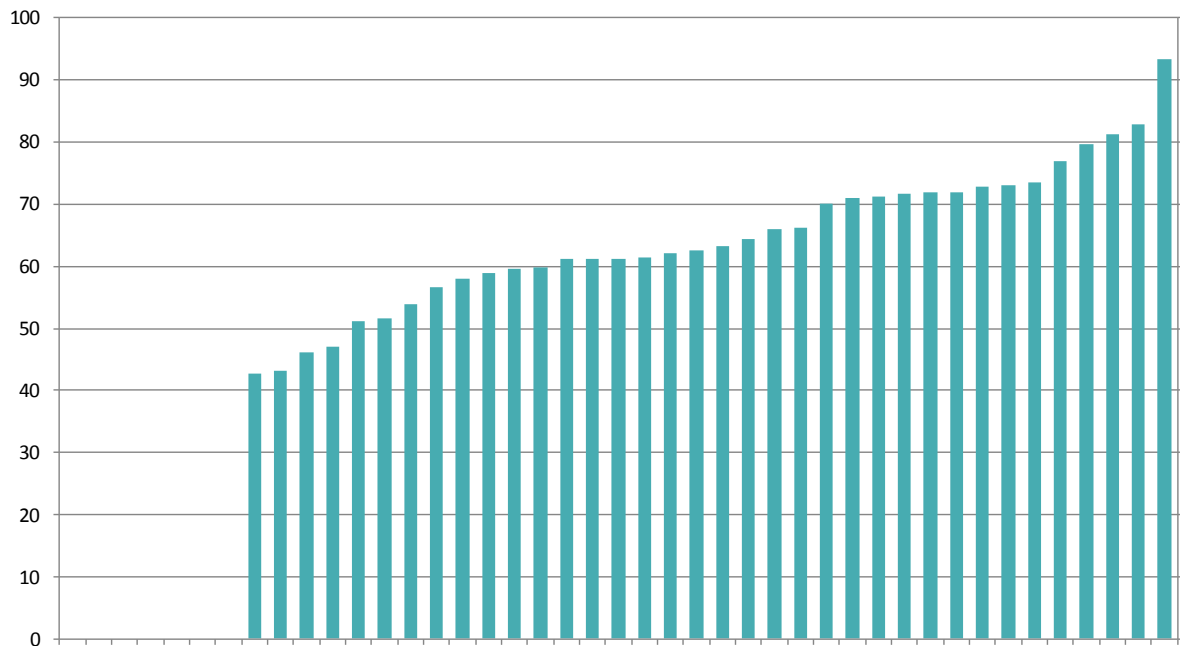
Domestic abuse

Cumbria Constabulary's response to victims of domestic abuse is good. Officers appreciate that protecting victims of domestic abuse is a priority. We found examples of supervisors attending scenes to monitor the police response and to support vulnerable victims. Cumbria had a positive domestic abuse report from HMIC in 2014 and has developed an action plan to track progress on implementing its recommendations, which are all still in progress.

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 21 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 13 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.

The way Cumbria Constabulary records data on its crime and custody systems does not allow the force to provide data on arrest rates for domestic abuse offences. Cumbria was one of seven forces which could not provide this data.

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



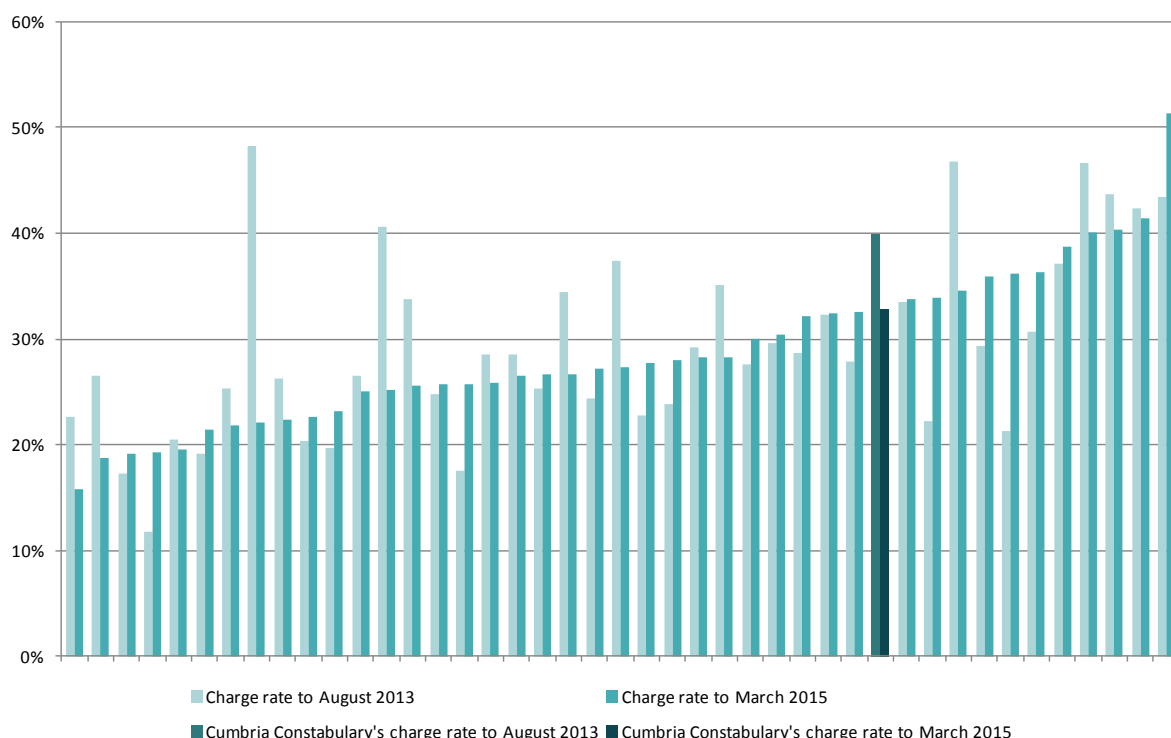
Source: HMIC data return

Staff in the control room and responding officers understand the need to prioritise the safety of the victim when they receive the initial call and subsequently attend domestic abuse incidents. The person answering the 999 call offered immediate, basic and practical safeguarding advice in the majority of cases.

HMIC reviewed six domestic abuse files, and found a good standard of investigation that focused on the victim.

The constabulary’s charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 33 percent, compared with 27 percent for England and Wales. This is a decrease since the last HMIC domestic abuse inspection when the constabulary rate was 40 percent for the 12 months to 31 August 2013, compared with 30 percent for England and Wales.

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



Source: HMIC data return

Cumbria Constabulary demonstrates a commitment to protecting victims of domestic abuse, which is mainly predicated on a positive approach to arresting domestic abuse perpetrators. However, HMIC found that frontline staff and supervisors are not always aware of all the immediate options available to keep the victim safe and where they can obtain specialist advice. Longer term safeguarding issues and support are managed through community safety advisors and the public protection units in TPAs. These have access to independent domestic violence advisors. HMIC found strong evidence of joint safeguarding activity to support vulnerable victims of domestic abuse, even when the victim was reluctant to engage with staff.

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 March 2014 but did not provide data on how many applications for their use have been made or granted or how many DVPOs have been breached.

The completion and application of these orders was another area where training had not been provided to frontline officers. We found that officers' understanding of how these preventive methods could be used was patchy. The constabulary needs to increase awareness of safeguarding options, particularly its use of DVPOs to keep vulnerable domestic abuse victims safe.

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Cumbria Constabulary requires improvement in the service it provides to vulnerable people. The constabulary should improve its response to vulnerable victims by ensuring that all staff understand how to identify, assess, respond to and safeguard vulnerable victims. HMIC found inconsistencies in the understanding that some staff have of a range of vulnerability issues. The constabulary's work with partners to improve services and share information is good.

The training of staff is a concern to us. Some training has been provided to improve the workforce's understanding of vulnerability and child sexual exploitation. But it has made little impact on the staff we spoke to.

We found that the constabulary keeps victims updated about the progress of their case well. However, HMIC found that not all victims in Cumbria were offered the opportunity to make a victim statement at the appropriate time.

Work between professionals in the children's safeguarding hub is good and the safety of children is prioritised. However, the constabulary needs to ensure the safeguarding hub has sufficient appropriately skilled police staff to manage referrals and any required safeguarding activity.

The collection and management of intelligence from vulnerable missing people can be improved. Currently this is not being inputted onto constabulary IT systems.

The constabulary is well prepared to respond to child sexual exploitation on an individual, case-by-case basis, once a victim has been identified. Cumbria needs to do much more to improve the quality of information available to increase its understanding of child sexual exploitation across the county and understand the risks better.

Officers attending domestic abuse incidents know how to assess risk and keep victims safe. They understand that safeguarding the victim is paramount. However, frontline staff and supervisors are not always aware of the immediate options available to keep the victim safe and where they can obtain specialist advice although longer term safeguarding issues and support are good.

Areas for improvement

- The constabulary should improve its response to vulnerable victims by ensuring that all staff understand how to identify, assess, respond to and safeguard vulnerable victims. HMIC found inconsistencies in the understanding that some staff have of a range of vulnerability issues, such as:
 - the national decision-making model with control room staff;
 - the immediate and longer term measures that can be provided to victims of domestic abuse to keep them safe; and
 - identification of the risks associated with child sexual exploitation.
- The constabulary should improve its safeguarding of vulnerable people, specifically children and victims of domestic abuse, by ensuring the safeguarding hub has sufficient appropriately-skilled police staff to manage referrals and any required safeguarding activity.
- The constabulary should ensure that it complies with the national crime recording standard for referrals from partner organisations regarding criminal offences involving children and other vulnerable people.
- The constabulary should improve its compliance with the code of practice for victims of crime specifically in ensuring victim personal statements are obtained and of good quality.
- The constabulary should improve its response to persistent and repeat missing children and those children at risk of sexual exploitation. It should do this by ensuring that it uses information from previous missing episodes to develop a co-ordinated and prioritised response, and that it uses effectively systems designed to support the management of information and cases.