

PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of Humberside Police



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Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Humberside Police England and Wales

151

350

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

Humberside Police England and Wales

15.2

15.8



Crime

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

Humberside Police England and Wales

71.8

61.6

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

Humberside Police England and Wales

+0.7%

+2.2%

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

Humberside Police England and Wales

6.9%

10.7%

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

Humberside Police England and Wales

7.0%

10.0%

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

Humberside Police England and Wales

+11.6%

+20.8%



Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

Humberside Police

England and Wales

43

66



Charge rate

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

Humberside Police

England and Wales

17.7%

16.6%

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

Humberside Police

England and Wales

25.8%

27.3%



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015

Humberside Police

England and Wales

82.4%

83.8%

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 Humberside Police.

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

Summary



Requires improvement

HMIC acknowledges that Humberside Police has committed significant effort and resource to offer a high quality service to the public. The chief officer team has made protecting vulnerable people a clear priority for the force, and police officers and staff understand and share this commitment. However, the force needs to improve how it identifies and responds to vulnerable people to keep them safe. As we previously identified in our report *PEEL: police efficiency 2015 – An inspection of Humberside Police*¹ the force needs to address the consequences of the implementation of its new way of working, its new operating model, to ensure that the right resources are deployed to the right incident at the right time. This should give confidence that the risk of harm to vulnerable people is being managed effectively. Given the scale of the challenge and risk that is posed to some of the most vulnerable people overall, Humberside Police requires improvement.

In general, the force successfully identifies repeat and vulnerable victims at the initial point of contact. However, there are some delays to answering calls and the force is closely monitoring and managing this situation. As a result, the number of abandoned calls had started to reduce at the time of the inspection. The force's ability to respond effectively is undermined by its current staff allocation, processes and shift patterns, which are not adequately aligned with demand. The force investigates crimes committed against the most vulnerable victims well, with generally the right level of expertise applied to the more complex investigations. This shows some progress since HMIC's crime inspection in 2014. However, some vulnerable victims are not receiving a good level of service and while the importance of victim contact is understood it is not always being provided.

Humberside Police has made changes but still needs to improve how it responds to missing and absent children. Its response to those assessed as high-risk is good but less so for those who are medium or low-risk. The management of cases assessed as absent does not follow force policy or national guidance which could pose a risk to vulnerable victims.

¹ *Peel: Police efficiency 2015 – An inspection of Humberside Police*, HMIC, October 2015. Available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/humberside-police-efficiency-2015.pdf

This inspection considered how well prepared the force is to tackle child sexual exploitation. The force has made a good start and must now build on this initial approach. It needs to ensure that this ambition translates into consistent operational practice.

The force's approach to domestic abuse has changed considerably in the last year and officers attending domestic abuse incidents have a good knowledge of how to assess risk and keep victims safe. This is a good example of progress the force has made since HMIC's last domestic abuse inspection in 2014. However, the problems created by the implementation of the new ways of working are resulting in some victims experiencing significant delays to the police response.

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

HMIC found a strong commitment to improving the service provided to vulnerable people. The force clearly has vulnerability as a priority, following the move in December 2014 to using the management of risk in law enforcement (MoRiLE) approach in developing the control strategy.² The chief officer team provides clear leadership and performance dashboards (easy to read, graphical presentations of the current state of performance) have been developed for domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation. Specific strategies have been recently introduced or refreshed including those for missing and absent, domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation.

The force recognises that, in order to provide a different, more tailored response to vulnerable people, it first needs to identify them correctly as vulnerable, and then understand which services would best meet their particular needs. While the force has taken these positive steps, the inconsistency in applying them means that the force still needs to improve in this area.

² Control strategy: this sets out and communicates the operational priorities for the force or command area and sets the long-term priorities for crime prevention, intelligence and enforcement.

Identifying those who are vulnerable

The force has good systems for identifying repeat (persistently-targeted) and vulnerable victims at the initial point of contact.

Forces define vulnerability in different ways. The majority of forces use either the definition from the government's Code of Practice for Victims of Crime³ or that referred to in ACPO guidance.⁴ Nine forces use their own definition or a combination of these definitions.

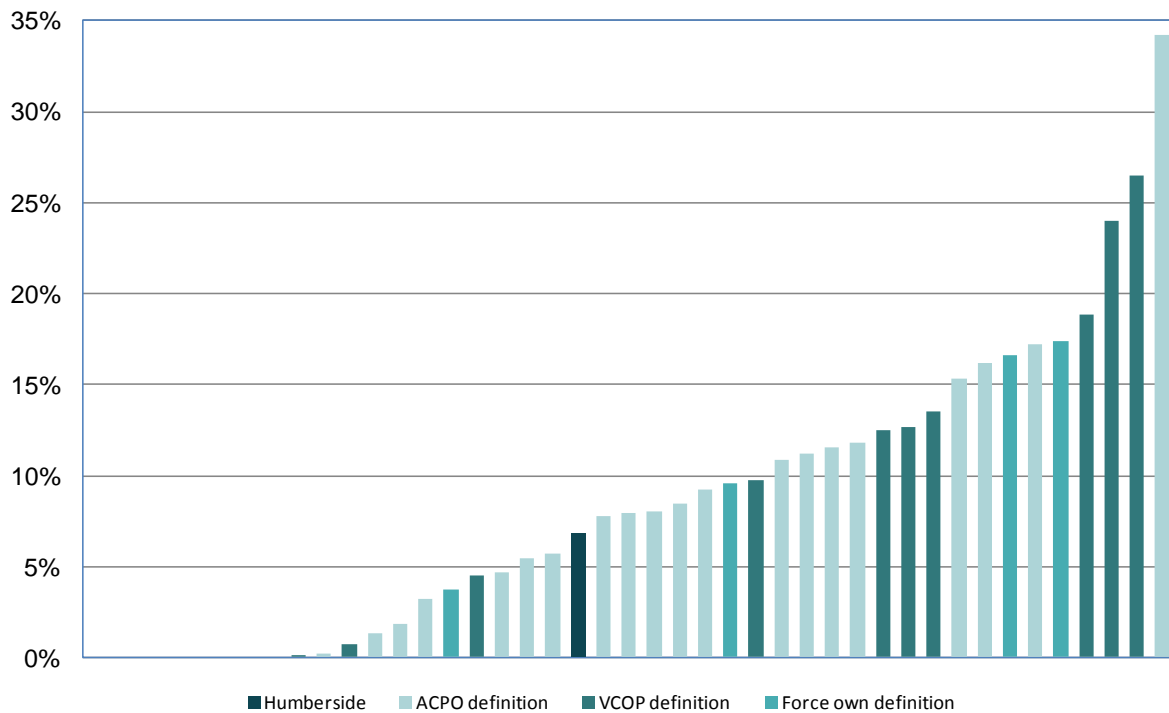
Humberside Police does not use a set definition of vulnerability but employs the THRIVE process to assess threat, harm and risk including assessing vulnerability using the characteristics within the ACPO and Victim Code definitions.

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, 6.9 percent of all recorded crimes in Humberside Police 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.

³ *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

⁴ 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/

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

All 999 and 101 calls to Humberside Police are routed to the force’s control room, known as the hub. Not all staff in the hub appeared to be well-trained yet but the inclusion of a specialist sergeant from the protecting vulnerable people unit (PVP) in the hub is helping to support them.

Flags, which appear on operators’ computer screens on the IT systems, identify repeat and vulnerable victims. Call-handlers also use an online system which searches for information from a number of the force’s IT systems based on the caller’s name and address. Call-handlers use this information in making their initial assessment of the call and the level of risk. This helps to ensure that repeat and vulnerable callers can be identified at the first point of contact. Many staff showed good awareness and understanding of vulnerability and risk and all showed a commitment to support vulnerable victims.

Some front office staff in police stations have not yet received vulnerability training, other than online training packages. However, this was being provided at the time of the inspection with approximately half of front office staff having been trained.

Assessing levels of risk and need

Humberside Police has taken the positive step to ensure that its response to the victim is based on the victim's needs rather than the type of crime. The force has done this by implementing a structured assessment based on threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability, and engagement (THRIVE). This is a more mature approach than determining how a call would be responded to simply by the type of incident or nature of the crime being reported and assists staff in determining the appropriate level of response. The force expects call-takers to use the national decision model⁵ and THRIVE to grade calls and prioritise resources. HMIC found that the force's use of THRIVE is inconsistent, but we saw increasing evidence of this taking place. The rationale for decision-making appears more frequently on incident logs since the force launched its new operating model in April 2015.

Quality assurance processes are in place to check compliance of incident categorisation, grading and call monitoring. These processes are generally adhered to, although we identified some inconsistencies as processes are not yet fully in place and understood. Supervisors of response officers and of staff who answer 999 calls check that the risk faced by a victim is recognised and assessed properly. Local and force leadership teams also review incidents involving vulnerable victims at a daily management meeting (known as the pacesetter). This ensures that the risk assessment is properly evaluated and appropriate investigative and safeguarding⁶ actions are put in place.

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

HMIC found that Humberside Police meets the requirements of some vulnerable groups better than others.

The force understands well the needs of people who are vulnerable because of domestic abuse, and those who are categorised as missing. However, Humberside Police is still developing its understanding of the needs of victims categorised as absent.⁷

⁵ National decision model (NDM) is specific to policing. It provides a consistent framework in which decisions can be examined and challenged, both at the time and afterwards. It is composed of six main elements: the police code of ethics being central to the decision; gather information; assess threat and risk; consider powers and force policy; identify options; and take action and review what happened.

⁶ The term safeguarding means providing protection and support to ensure the safety of the vulnerable person and prevent further harm.

⁷ 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.

It is developing its approach to tackling child sexual exploitation, and recognises the strong link between child sexual exploitation and missing and absent children.

The PVP is located at two sites in Brigg and Hull, and provides specialist resources to the whole force to investigate serious or complex crimes. To provide the most appropriate support to vulnerable victims, the force has excluded the PVP from achieving any savings as part of its medium-term resource strategy.

The force has many channels to raise the awareness of its officers and staff about vulnerability and associated issues. The force has launched a 'what do you see' campaign and is supporting this with training and awareness activities. This campaign is designed to challenge staff and officer perceptions of vulnerability. Some officers and staff we spoke to were aware of the initiative, but not all, and we did not see campaign posters in all the police stations we visited.

As a consequence of resource problems arising from the force's implementation of its new operating model in April 2015, Humberside Police needs to improve how it responds to victims. The force has recognised this and at the time of the inspection, had started work to understand and address these problems.

How well does the force initially respond to vulnerable victims?⁸

Humberside Police needs to improve how it responds to vulnerable victims.

Staff within the hub are extremely enthusiastic and determined to do a good job and provide the best possible service to callers. However, the current staffing situation in the hub presents some difficulties. Staff do not have enough time to respond to calls as well as they would like. The force is aware of this, and while its recruitment process takes place it is using temporarily police officers in the hub to increase capacity.

Since April 2015 the force has seen a high rate of abandoned⁹ non-emergency calls. The force has taken steps to understand and monitor this closely. Some of the calls logged by the force are not actually abandoned but may be showing as such because of how the force's IT system records them. The rate of actual abandoned calls has now considerably reduced but further work is still needed to bring this to acceptable levels.

⁸ 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.

⁹ Where callers have abandoned/hung up the call prior to it being answered by the force.

HMIC reviewed 14 incidents by listening to the initial calls and examining the corresponding computer logs.¹⁰ We found a number of examples of call-handlers providing timely, reassuring and rational safeguarding advice. However, we also found cases where the deployment of a police officer to the scene was significantly delayed. Our reality testing in the hub showed that these delays are still happening, with staff in the hub recognising correctly that an officer should attend an incident but not then deploying an officer. After numerous delays appointment cars are sometimes used to attend. This means that vulnerable victims are not seen by a police officer for a number of hours or days after the incident. In these cases it appears that the deciding factor was the hub being unable to identify an available officer to attend.

In addition, in some cases it appears that the hub had not assessed adequately the impact of a delay on the gathering of quality evidence and the force may therefore be missing opportunities in terms of the subsequent investigation.

Response officers

Officers we spoke to showed a good understanding of vulnerability and risk. They all understood the recent changes to force policies, such as the expansion of the definition of domestic abuse to include inter-familial abuse.

We found that officers who responded to incidents assessed risk consistently and they showed a good understanding of initial safeguarding options. This was particularly evident in their gathering of information from victims of domestic abuse and completion of the domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence (DASH)¹¹ risk assessments. We also found that frontline staff knew how to make appropriate referrals to partner agencies for children whom they deemed to be at risk.

The force has recently extended the time that specialist officers are on duty to provide 24-hour coverage. This has meant that officers trained in dealing with vulnerable victims are always available to provide specialist support. However, not all the frontline officers we spoke to were aware of this change.

HMIC saw evidence that the some of the force's processes and the fact that resources are not matched to demand are adversely affecting the force's ability to respond effectively and appropriately to all vulnerable victims. The appointment system was being used in cases where initially an incident had been graded for

¹⁰HMIC requested initially 20 calls, but the force was not able to locate the recordings in six, which predated the new operating model.

¹¹ DASH (domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence) is a widely used tool which aims to assist the force to respond positively to incidents of domestic abuse, to assess risk and vulnerability, and to implement immediate safeguarding actions.

attendance, but no available officers could be identified. Double-crewing of police cars is commonplace which reduces the availability of officers to attend incidents.

Supervision of the response to vulnerable victims

Supervisors play an active role in checking and approving the risk assessment process. For instance, they are notified by the hub of all new incidents of domestic abuse. They then check the risk assessment conducted by the response officer, and check the quality of the investigation before the initial incident can be closed on the system. However, we found that the quality of the supervision was inconsistent.

How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners to keep victims safe?¹²

While the force has invested to improve the investigation of crimes committed against vulnerable people and how they are kept safe, HMIC found that this is an area where the force needs to improve. Humberside Police has recently restructured, bringing together under a single command the staff responsible for safeguarding victims and those who carry out specialist investigations into crimes against vulnerable victims.

In general, we found that the quality of investigations is good. The investigations for high-risk and complex crimes, including domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation, are handled by specialist teams within the PVP. The trained PVP detectives are responsible for both the investigation of the offences allocated to them and the safeguarding activity around the victim. We found that these specialists conduct good quality investigations.

However, we are concerned for the welfare of some PVP officers. This is due to the shift pattern not being adequately aligned with demand, the high workloads being carried by some PVP officers, and the absences and redeployments to other departments which mean that the PVP has substantially fewer staff than the structure charts suggest. Annual leave requests are frequently being refused as a result of some staff being off sick and others being redeployed to other duties. The force is monitoring this and supporting the PVP with additional officers which had been extended until at least August 2015.

The allocated days policy (where staff undertake different activities on specified days on rotation) and the hub deploying PVP staff to attend low-level incidents as the only visibly available resource are adding to the pressure. Some specialist detectives are

¹² 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.

carrying high workloads, for example one detective constable had a workload of 24 crimes including a complex rape, child protection cases and high-risk domestic abuse cases.

Investigation of crimes involving vulnerable people

HMIC reviewed 40 investigations,¹³ of which 14 were identified as involving a vulnerable person. This demonstrated that there was room for improvement in the way the force allocated and recorded progress on investigations; while the quality of initial action was good, the follow up of investigative opportunities was inconsistent and there were several cases where there were unexplained delays in the investigation. We found that supervision of investigations was weak, where it was recorded.

In cases where the force identified vulnerability, it consistently demonstrated a high level of initial safeguarding and victim care, although this was not always recorded consistently. We found that victim care plans were not routinely recorded on the case file or crime report, although the force has since taken steps to address this.

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,¹⁴ which they can use to explain how the crime has affected them.

Victims should also be kept updated about the progress of their case. Our review of 40 case files showed examples of unexplained delays in investigations being followed up after the crime had been recorded, and several entries on records detailing victim calls to the police to find out what was happening with their case. We also found cases in which the victim re-contacted the police to withdraw their allegation early on in the enquiry.

Our recent findings show that victim impact statements and victim contact management have improved and officers and staff understand the importance of

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

keeping victims updated. However, in the PVP some staff do not have time for regular contact with victims, and some supervisors do not have time to review this.

Our review of case files found that compliance with the victim's code of practice was not consistently recorded, especially in recognising that some vulnerable victims would require additional support when preparing to give evidence at court. We noted this particularly in cases which involved victims with less obvious vulnerability.

Working with partners

In general, the force works effectively with partners to support staff in child protection, child sexual exploitation, and high-risk domestic abuse cases. The force works well with the independent domestic violence advisory (IDVA) service which provides positive interaction and support for victims. A good example of working with partners to focus on vulnerable women is the Pause¹⁵ pilot in Hull. At a recent national meeting to discuss Pause, it was noted that Hull is the only trial site to have police involvement.

Humberside Police operates in an area that has four well-established multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) or early help and safeguarding hubs (EHASHs). These bring together those professionals crucial to ensuring information is shared, analysis takes place and decisions can be made to safeguard children and vulnerable adults as quickly as possible.

The missing and exploited team (MET) within the PVP provides a key link between the force and the MASH/EHASH. Intelligence is exchanged between the MET and the MASH to ensure prompt and effective joint decisions can be taken by the different agencies to protect children.

Each MASH/EHASH includes a detective sergeant and administrative support provided by Humberside Police. Following a recent external review, which identified areas for improvement, an evaluation is continuing into how the MASH could be improved. At the time of our inspection, process mapping had been completed as the first step. An important consideration is about logistics, such as inadequate IT for instance being able to use video links for strategy discussions.

Humberside Police officers routinely attend multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)¹⁶ with professionals from other bodies in order to safeguard those considered to be at most risk of harm from domestic abuse. HMIC observed

¹⁵ Pause is an organisation which addresses the needs of women who have, or are at risk of, multiple children being removed from their care. It has secured funds from the Department for Education's Innovation Fund to test Pause in six local authorities.

¹⁶ 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.

two conferences and found that the meeting discussed only high-risk cases. We observed good participation from those present with clear evidence that the MARAC was effectively safeguarding victims and children through information sharing and joint action planning.

As part of the inspection we attended the multi-agency child exploitation (MACE) meetings. These are meetings held once a month for each of the four local authority areas to ensure that potential child victims are risk assessed and safeguarded. We found good evidence of a multi-agency approach to deal with each of the individual cases that were discussed. Allocated actions from previous meetings are reviewed and followed up and future actions raised and documented. All of the agencies are required to agree on the risk assessment for each of the children discussed.

The MACEs also considered dealing with offenders by way of child abduction warning notices and sexual harm prevention notices.¹⁷ We saw evidence of intelligence being brought to the meeting by partners which was the most recent possible to inform decisions on how children could be safeguarded more effectively.

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 force 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 force 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

Humberside Police needs to improve how it responds to missing and absent children. It has a clear up-to-date policy which covers recording and investigation and the document contains detail of specific areas of responsibility. Both missing and absent are clearly defined categories. Our inspection identified that operational responsibility for the management of missing persons has changed on multiple occasions in the three months prior to the inspection.

¹⁷Child abduction notices and sexual harm prevention notices are disruptive measures against perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. Child abduction warning notices can be issued against individuals who are suspected of grooming children by stating that they have no permission to associate with the named child and that if they do so they can be arrested under the Child Abduction Act 1984 and Children Act 1989.

The force understands and has clearly identified the link between missing and child sexual exploitation risks. The frontline officers and staff we spoke to demonstrated their understanding of this and we saw formal discussion of missing incidents at the MACE meetings. However, while the force has a problem profile¹⁸ for child sexual exploitation, no such profile exists for missing and absent cases.

HMIC found that Humberside Police manages high-risk missing persons to an appropriate standard with many good examples being observed. These cases are managed through the force's command and control system enabling the effective management of resources to complete time critical tasks.

The force's decision to run all low and medium-risk missing investigations on the missing persons database has caused considerable concern to the staff designated to complete the management of such cases. We found that limited knowledge among officers and staff of how the database works, and many have not been trained in its use, causing confusion and raising concern that risk is not being managed appropriately. However, we found staff creating ways to work around this to try to reduce these risks. Valuable information on repeatedly missing children has been stored on missing person action plans (also known as trigger plans).

However, when tested, staff could not locate these plans, which would appear to have been removed from the computer system. The plans could be retrieved from paper records.

Our inspection also found that the management of absent cases does not follow force policy or national guidance. We saw evidence that children with a medium child sexual exploitation risk marker were not being upgraded to a missing category but were being categorised as absent. As a consequence, no practical policing activity to locate the child is done, which in turn would reduce risk. Partner agencies are carrying out return home interviews, although these are not conducted consistently across the four local authority areas. This limits the force's ability to gather valuable intelligence which may reduce future risk and demand.

¹⁸ A problem profile is intended to provide the force greater understanding of established and emerging crime or incident series, priority locations or other identified high-risk issues. It should be based on the research and analysis of a wide range of information sources, including information from partner organisations. It should contain recommendations for making decisions and options for action.

Preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation

The force has made a good start in ensuring it is prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation. This inspection has focused on actions and activities the force has taken to understand and identify the extent to which children are at risk of sexual exploitation and the policies and procedures it is putting in place to tackle this. We did not test the quality of how the force 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.

Child sexual exploitation is clearly a priority area for the force, and so is included in the force control strategy for 2015. Humberside Police has a strategy, problem profile and dashboard in place for child sexual exploitation although this is not visible to all staff. Full use of the dashboard across the force is being delayed until it can be automatically updated, since this process is currently manual. The force would benefit from bringing forward this implementation to provide all staff with additional information on child sexual exploitation risks in their local area.

The force engages well with the community and works continuously to engage with hard-to-reach communities. All staff we spoke to understand the indicators for child sexual exploitation and actively look for this in their daily work. They are clear that they would submit an intelligence report and seek further advice from the specialist team in the PVP if they did suspect child sexual exploitation. The force has started to provide child sexual exploitation training to staff and has launched an internal marketing campaign, named 'what do you see'.

Humberside Police has run a number of operations to identify child sexual exploitation, protect victims and bring perpetrators to justice. These have included joint patrolling of 'hotspots' with a partner agency, and the investigation of an organised crime group for child sexual exploitation, which identified five victims and enabled the prosecution of three offenders. A further case identified 12 victims and 40 others who were found to be at risk from one perpetrator, who has since been charged with offences.

The force's process to grade child sexual exploitation risk as low, medium or high was not understood well by officers and staff. However, all the officers and staff we spoke to stated they would treat any child sexual exploitation victim as high risk and would respond in such a way. If the force intends to continue with the current grading, the different risk levels need to be clearly communicated to the workforce, together with the expected action to be taken by officers in each case.

Humberside Police has existing safeguarding procedures in place to support those children at risk of sexual exploitation. The links between the MET and the MASH/EHASH mean that the force can share information quickly with other organisations providing services for children. This enables the force to contribute jointly to effective safeguarding measures.

Domestic abuse

Humberside Police's response to high-risk victims of domestic abuse is generally good, although for other victims it requires improvement. The force's approach to domestic abuse has changed significantly over the last 6 to 12 months. The force has adopted the national definition of domestic abuse and introduced mandatory attendance at all domestic abuse incidents. The force priorities have changed from focusing on serious acquisitive crime¹⁹ to vulnerability, and domestic abuse is now part of the force control strategy. The force is addressing the ten recommendations from the previous HMIC domestic abuse inspection in 2014.

Staff recognise the importance of domestic abuse and further training is being provided by the force. Supervision of domestic abuse cases is mandatory and staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in relation to supporting victims and investigating incidents.

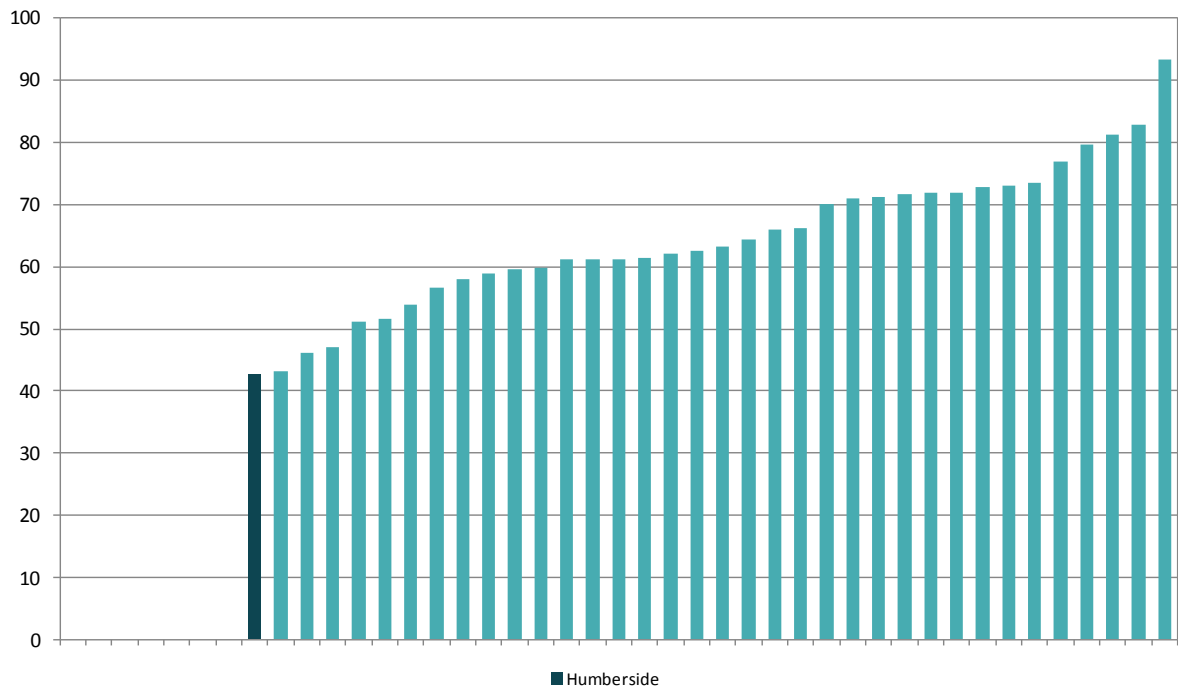
In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse increased by 12 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 7 percent of all police recorded crime. Across England and Wales during the same period there was a 21 percent increase, with domestic abuse accounting for 10 percent of all police recorded crime.

Humberside Police demonstrates effective immediate and longer-term safeguarding measures to protect high-risk victims of domestic abuse, including taking positive action such as arrest.

As shown in figure 2, for every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded Humberside Police made 43 arrests.

¹⁹ Serious acquisitive crime is defined as domestic burglary, car crime (theft of or from a vehicle), and robbery.

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

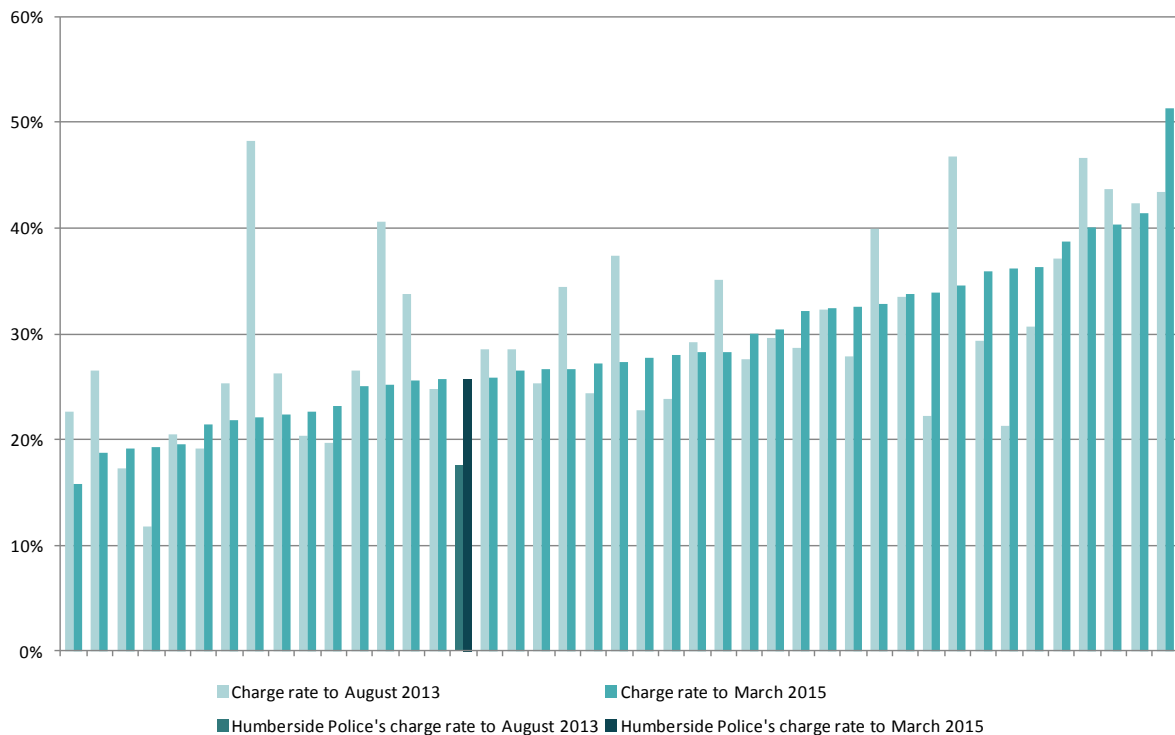
Safeguarding is considered from the point of initial reporting and throughout the investigation. The person answering the 999 call offers immediate and practical safeguarding advice, and frontline staff can articulate the ways to keep people safe.

The investigation of high-risk incidents of domestic abuse sits within the domestic abuse unit in PVP with specially-trained domestic violence officers carrying out safeguarding activity and liaising with partners. Responsibility for safeguarding activity for medium and low-risk domestic abuse victims is not always clear.

HMIC reviewed 12 files with a domestic abuse element, and found a good standard of initial investigation centred on the victim. However, our review and inspection found regular inconsistencies in the quality of the subsequent investigation and the recording of details of victim contact and care.

The force’s charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 26 percent, compared with 27 percent for England and Wales. This is an increase since the last HMIC domestic abuse inspection when the force rate was 18 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

Although we found a number of examples of call-handlers providing timely, reassuring and rational safeguarding advice, we also saw cases where there were delays in deployment in domestic abuse incidents. For example, some diary appointments were arranged when the perpetrator was no longer on the premises. Our observations in the hub showed that these delays are still happening. Some of the logs are clearly marked as not suitable for appointment following the THRIVE assessment, however they are eventually being allocated to appointment cars. In these cases it appears that the deciding factor was an apparent lack of officer availability to attend the initial incident. These delays increase the risks of the loss of confidence of the victim and opportunities to secure evidence.

When officers attend domestic abuse incidents we saw evidence that the initial investigation was undertaken and that risk assessments and referrals to other agencies, such as child protection referrals, were being completed and submitted appropriately.

The force has introduced 24-hour cover by the PVP to provide specialist support and advice. Some of the frontline officers we spoke to, who are the first response to domestic abuse incidents, were unaware of the 24/7 support and believed staff in the PVP are only available during office hours. As a result, the force is not making the most of the opportunity to ensure officers attending incidents use specialist safeguarding advice.

Not all officers we spoke to were aware of the full range of safeguarding options available to them, such as domestic violence court sittings and the availability of mobile phones for victims. However, there is evidence that officers are aware of and make appropriate use of other safeguarding measures including domestic violence protection notices, domestic violence prevention orders (DVPOs) and Clare's Law.²⁰

HMIC also examined the force'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 force began using DVPOs in September 2014; it made 56 applications to magistrates' courts for their use, of which all were granted. Three 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 5 percent compared with the England and Wales rate of 17 percent.²¹

Body-worn video cameras which are used to record evidence at scenes are not routinely worn by officers. However, although officers have been trained in their use they did not know where the cameras were stored. The force is therefore missing opportunities to gather important evidence, particularly in domestic abuse cases.

²⁰ A scheme to let people find out from police if their partner has a history of domestic violence, known as Clare's Law

²¹ The England and Wales figure is based on data provided by 35 forces

Summary of findings



Requires improvement

Humberside Police has committed significant effort and resource to offer a high quality service. Protecting vulnerable people is a priority for the force that is shared and understood by officers and staff. However, the force needs to address the consequences of the implementation of its new way of working to ensure that the right resources are deployed to the right incident at the right time.

The force effectively identifies repeat and vulnerable victims at the initial point of contact. However, we found some delays to answering calls. The force is closely monitoring and managing this and the number of abandoned calls has started to reduce. The force investigates well those crimes committed against the most vulnerable victims, with generally the right level of expertise applied to the more complex investigations. While the force understands the importance of victim contact, it is not always achieved.

Humberside Police has made changes but still needs to improve how it responds to missing and absent children. Its response to those assessed as high-risk is good but less so for those who are medium or low-risk. The management of absent cases does not follow force policy or national guidance which could pose a risk to vulnerable victims.

The force has made a good start in ensuring it is well prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation.

Causes of concern

The force's ability to investigate and safeguard vulnerable victims is a cause of concern for HMIC. As we previously identified in our report *PEEL: Police efficiency 2015 – An inspection of Humberside Police*, and reinforced during this inspection, the force needs to address the consequences of the implementation of its new operating model to ensure that the right resources are available to respond, investigate and safeguard vulnerable victims. The capacity of the hub and protecting vulnerable people unit, in particular, to deal with demand means that the force cannot respond consistently to victims in a timely and effective manner, even though many of these victims have been assessed to be vulnerable.

Recommendation

- To address this cause of concern, HMIC recommends the force should immediately take steps to ensure the functions identified are adequately resourced and workloads prioritised to protect vulnerable persons.

Areas for improvement

- The force should improve its response to vulnerable victims by ensuring that it applies effective measures to reduce the number of abandoned calls for service, its call-takers consistently use the THRIVE process to assess risk and vulnerability, and officer attendance at incidents is timely to secure investigative opportunities and provide safeguarding and support for victims.
- The force should improve its investigation of cases with vulnerable victims by ensuring cases are investigated to the required standards and in a timely manner with effective supervision and recording of plans and actions.
- The force should improve its response to missing children, specifically those assessed to be at low and medium risk. The force should achieve this by ensuring it improves its understanding of the scale and nature of the issue, that in persistent cases information from previous missing episodes is stored effectively and used to develop a co-ordinated and prioritised response, that it understands and responds to factors influencing risk assessment, and that it effectively uses systems designed to support case management.