

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP16/36

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
9 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**SUBJECT: PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE - CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE UPDATE**

SUMMARY:

1. This report provides an update from the Protecting Vulnerable People Directorate in relation to Children and Young Persons, identifying key performance information and any significant operational or organisational issues.
2. There are no significant financial implications to note within this report.
3. Increasing demand is placing greater strain on current resources.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Accountability and Performance Panel is asked to note the ongoing increase in demand involving offences against children.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Child Protection in its widest definition continues to attract close scrutiny through Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC) and other review bodies and inspectorates.
- 1.2 The Constabulary has also recently supported Suffolk County Council and the Local Safeguarding Children Board through their Ofsted inspection on Child Safeguarding. A number of police processes were scrutinised within this inspection. Both areas were found to be good.
- 1.3 The Constabulary continues to develop its Child Protection and associated areas of work in line with HMIC inspection findings, Local Safeguarding Board procedures and other best practice.
- 1.4 There is a current programme of work to significantly increase resources within Protecting Vulnerable People Directorate. A significant proportion of these resources will be within the Safeguarding and Investigation teams.

Local Children's Safeguarding Board

- 1.5 The Suffolk Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a statutory body with a wide remit to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in Suffolk. There have been some minor changes to representation at the various board meetings. The Detective Superintendent Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) represents the Constabulary at the full LSCB and at the Executive Committee. In addition he chairs the Exploited Children Group. The Detective Chief Inspector PVP now represents the Constabulary at the other sub-groups of the Board.
- 1.7 The core statutory duty of an LSCB is to ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place across agencies to protect children from harm. There are also obligations placed on LSCBs to ensure that the welfare of children is promoted. The work of the LSCB includes:-
 - The development of policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
 - Communication and awareness raising;
 - Monitoring and scrutiny of safeguarding and child protection work across the county.
- 1.8 The Constabulary presented its audit under Section 11 of the Children's Act in May 2016.
- 1.9 The Exploited Children Sub-Group continues to strengthen the multi-agency response to Child Sexual Exploitation and other forms of child exploitation. The links to online safety and to the risk of radicalisation has been made with the relevant county processes. As before, awareness raising continues as a priority with focus now on hotels and similar establishments.
- 1.10 The Constabulary has secured support of the LSCB to deliver the College of Policing Multi-Agency Child Abuse Investigation Training Module, and it is anticipated this will be delivered in spring 2017.

Working Together

- 1.11 The Constabulary continues to support a number of ongoing Serious Case Reviews.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

- 1.12 The MASH continues to develop both in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. The availability of meaningful management information has led to focussed intervention and development in a number of areas including child sexual exploitation. The parallel tasking and coordinating process that sits alongside MASH processes receives strong partnership support and has added depth to the management of children at heightened risk of exploitation.
- 1.13 Governance of the MASH continues through the MASH Strategic Board which meets on a bi-monthly basis. Suffolk MASH is recognised nationally as good practice.
- 1.14 The planned integration of Domestic Abuse processes into the MASH has commenced. The Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) team are now embedded within the department and it is planned that Domestic Abuse Team officers will also be co-located creating additional dynamism in information sharing and risk assessment. Work continues to move more Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) processes into the MASH. This work is supported by 'SafeLives', a national charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse and previously called Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA).
- 1.15 Processes are now in place to facilitate the sharing of police child concern referrals linked to Domestic Abuse with schools and health visitors.
- 1.16 In the period July 2015 to July 2016 the MASH received 21,265 contacts in relation to concerns for children. For the period July 2014 to July 2015 this figure was 21,003. Whilst some of this increase is undoubtedly due to the development of awareness of the MASH it also represents the increase in demand seen across the child protection arena. Approximately 40% of all referrals relating to children are generated by the police. Of the 21,265 contacts 889 cases resulted in Section 47 Children's Act procedures being commenced (where there is a concern for serious harm).
- 1.17 The 889 Section 47 cases represent those that result in joint investigations between Police and Social Care. These cases have grown steadily over the last three years. In 2014 618 cases met this threshold.
- 1.18 The longer term trend remains one of increased referrals. The period post the 'Baby P' Serious Case Review has seen a marked increase in referrals and this shows no sign of abating. Additional focus on CSE and child neglect has added to the demand across child protection.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)/Missing Children

- 1.19 The Constabulary has stopped using the 'absent' definition in relation to Children and all children reported missing are recorded under the definition of missing.

- 1.20 Constabulary continues to work closely with the Regional CSE Coordinator with strong links coordinating responses both internally and across a range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies. The Constabulary continues to identify opportunities to link with the Eastern Region Specialist Operations Unit (ERSOU).
- 1.21 By the end of August 2016 the Human Trafficking & Exploitation Team (HTE) and Online Investigation team will sit under a single Detective Inspector increasing coordination of these inter-linked areas of business.
- 1.22 The Constabulary is to review and revise its CSE guidance material for front line officers. The College of Policing has recently provided training materials in relation to CSE and Learning and Development have been asked to consider the delivery of this material.
- 1.23 The Constabulary has now developed stronger relationships with the county children's homes and, assisted by the Joint Performance and Analysis Department (JPAD), provide individual reports to each home to assist in safeguarding children. The second iteration of children's homes information reports are under development for delivery in autumn 2016.
- 1.24 The Constabulary has led on the setting up of a multi-agency oversight panel in relation to complex abuse investigations. These investigations impact across a range of agencies. With the increase in investigations falling into this category there is the need for effective strategic oversight to consider resource and response.
- 1.25 April 2015 to March 2016 there were 1650 episodes of missing children. A large number of the missing episodes are attributable to a reasonably small number of children and young people, for example during this period one young person went missing a total of 63 times and 6 children and young people were reported missing 20-32 times. The majority of children (414) were reported as missing only once. Significant work has been completed to ensure the more robust management of safe and well and return home interviews.
- 1.26 Frequent missing children continue to be a significant issue. Many of these repeat missing cases are high risk and are linked to exploitation. A number of investigations are in place to address these issues. A wider review of how early intervention would reduce the number of children who repeatedly go missing has been commenced. The Constabulary has looked to explore innovative ways to use civil orders with the aim to reduce repetitive missing episodes. The addition of a local authority Missing Person Coordinator has now ensured a more robust approach to return home interviews being conducted.
- 1.27 The Constabulary has received 3 referrals from Operation Hydrant since the last report. Operation Hydrant is the national coordinating response to historic allegations of child abuse linked to prominent individuals or institutions. There have also been referrals from the National Child Abuse Panel and the Independent Inquiry into Child Abuse. The number of referrals from these origins is likely to increase.
- 1.28 The Human Trafficking and Exploitation Team have been engaged in a number of complex investigations including the trafficking and rape of a vulnerable Lithuanian female, the abduction of two young people from a children's home and robustly supporting a complex interfamilial historic sexual abuse investigation linked to the Rotherham CSE enquiry.

E-Safety

- 1.29 Suffolk Constabulary and the Suffolk Police & Crime Commissioner have been successful in being awarded a grant through the Home Office Police Innovation Fund (PIF) for 2016/17 for a proof of concept Multi-Agency E-safety Crime Prevention Proposal (MECSP).
- 1.30 Online Safety continues to be an area of significant concern for Suffolk. There are many providers of generic awareness raising programmes that deliver into schools. It has been identified that raising awareness of these issues to parents continues to be difficult and that an effective strategy is needed to build on this provision through the development of specific supportive programmes. Current initiatives focus on prevention and there is limited emphasis on early intervention where heightened risk has already been identified. The project aim is to develop a support programme that keeps the child or children at its centre but engages with child, parents, schools and other appropriate agencies to safeguard and change risky online behaviour.
- 1.31 Proof of concept primary research has been commissioned including a rapid evidence assessment, good practice review and evaluation of the results undertaken by appropriate academic professional(s) during 2016/2017 analysing the types of risk behaviours young people display when communicating in the digital space, on issues pertaining to personal e-safety, cyber bullying, sexting and associated behaviours on line.
- 1.32 The MESCP Project Board has been created as governance for the duration of the project chaired by ACC Kearton with representation from Suffolk County Children Services and the OPCC.
- 1.33 The Constabulary participated in a county wide conference February 2016 focussing on E-Safety and how to raise awareness of online safety issues across professionals and the public. The 2017 conference is currently under development.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

- 1.34 The Child SARC benefits from advanced equipment and provides an effective service to young victims of serious sexual abuse and support to their family or carers.
- 1.35 In the period from September 2015 to July 2016 64 children attended the SARC. Of those 21 children were under the age of 13 and 43 were within the 13 to 17 year old age range. This compares to a total of 92 for the same period the preceding year.

Online Investigation

- 1.36 The Constabulary continues to focus on those individuals making, possessing, sharing and distributing indecent images of children (IIOC). The Constabulary makes effective use of technology to identify those using file sharing platforms.
- 1.37 Between August 2015 and August 2016 the Online Investigation Team undertook enforcement action against 83 individuals linked to IIOC.
- 1.38 The indication from the National Crime Agency is that the number of referrals to forces concerning IIOC is likely to increase. In response to this identified risk the NCA have significantly increased resources both at the national and regional level to support forces. The Constabulary also saw a marked increase in the number of referrals from other forces as Constabularies nationwide have put more resources into the identification and investigation of those distributing IIOC's.
- 1.39 The Online Investigation Team has been engaged in a number of complex investigations including successfully identifying two children who have been subjected to contact sexual offences by persons connected with them. Appropriate referrals to safeguard those children are in place.

Training

- 1.40 A number of specialist Child Abuse Investigation courses and Child Death investigation courses have been scheduled over the coming 12 months. This will ensure that current resources are appropriately trained and that there is capacity for those additional growth posts.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 There are no financial implications to note.

3. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 3.1 Demand across all areas of child protection has risen significantly and steadily over the last 24 months and this increase shows no sign of reducing. This increase in demand will place greater strain on current resource levels.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	No
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	No – as no financial implications noted
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	No – there are no issues likely to impact on either diversity or human rights implications
Have human resource implications been considered?	Yes – no HR implications identified.
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	Yes – the report makes reference to Objective 4 – 'caring for victims and vulnerable people'
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	Yes – Both the MASH and SARC are subject to multi-agency governance arrangements.
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	Yes - increase in indecent images of children has been discussed with the Constabulary Corporate Communications department.
Have all relevant ethical factors been taken into consideration in developing this submission?	Yes