

Durham Constabulary

Jo Farrell BSc (Hons)
Chief Constable

Chief Constable's Office
Constabulary Headquarters
Aykley Heads
DURHAM
County Durham
DH1 5TT



Altogether Better Policing

Tel. No.: (0191) 375 2265
DX: 68850/Peterlee 8
Web Site: www.durham.police.uk
Our Ref: CC

HMI Williams
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
6th Floor, Globe House,
89 Ecclestone Square, London
SW1V 1PN

30th April 2020

DPA

Thank you for the recently published HMICFRS report following the inspection of child protection services in Durham, which took place in October 2019. I am grateful for the positive findings contained in the report.

In relation to the identified areas for improvement, please be reassured that a Force action plan was established immediately following the inspection fieldwork, and is managed by the Child Protection Gold Group, chaired by the Head of the Safeguarding and Neighbourhoods Command. I write to update you on Durham Constabulary's progress and action taken against each of the recommendations made in the report, as requested.

In relation to Recommendation 1 - We recommend that Durham Constabulary immediately reviews the application of the diary appointment system used within the control room. We recommend that Durham Constabulary within three months makes sure that children's concerns and views are obtained and recorded (including noting their behaviour and demeanour). This will help influence decisions made about them.

The position statement of Durham Constabulary remains that diary appointments may be used in response to calls for service where children may be present or involved where this is the right thing to do, after taking account of risk factors to the child or children present and also of the wider risk to children.

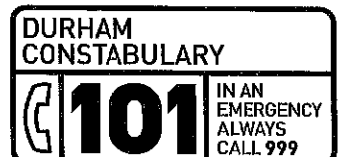
This follows a review of the application of the diary appointment system which commenced



facebook

www.durham.police.uk

101



DHP000518_001

immediately after the HMICFRS inspection with terms of reference to provide reassurance to the force and to stakeholders that diary appointments are only used where appropriate and where full risk assessment has taken place.

The review has resulted in the introduction of additional level of scrutiny of those crime and incident categories where there is a higher likelihood of children being involved or present e.g. domestic crimes, domestic incidents, harassment, stalking and sexual offences. This scrutiny is carried out by the Head of Force Control Room who undertakes to ensure that all harm has been addressed and that any required learning is shared with both the individual and the wider teams. Diary supervisory staff in Force Control Room have also been tasked with immediately highlighting any incidents that have been deferred to the diary that may contain a potential risk to a child or children to the attention of the Head of Force Control Room or the Force Control Room Manager. Posters have been designed and placed around the Force Control Room, reminding all staff to consider the child's safeguarding in any incident in which they are involved. A 'Through the Eyes of a Child' training package bespoke to Force Control Room staff is being developed in conjunction with Safeguarding teams. All newly appointed call handlers already receive a Safeguarding input delivered by a Safeguarding Officer and their final test will now always include a child safeguarding call for service to evidence a high level of understanding and application. A pocket 'Advice Card' has also been developed detailing what should and shouldn't be deferred to the diary car.

The positive use of body worn camera footage outlined in the Inspection report continues to be encouraged with specific focus on the voice of the child. This is tracked through monthly reviews carried out by front line Inspectors. There are also measures being taken to increase the awareness of the importance of capturing the voice of child or children throughout the investigation as highlighted in the response to recommendation 4 (please see below).

In relation to Recommendation 2 - We recommend that Durham Constabulary immediately improves practice in cases of children who go missing from home. As a minimum, this should include making staff more aware of: • making sure its officers and staff recognise risk factors; • taking account of those risk factors in its work to locate missing children; • making its officers and staff aware of their responsibilities for protecting children who are reported missing from home, especially where this happens regularly; and • demonstrating awareness of the importance of investigating where a child has been, and who they have been with.

In response to this recommendation, refreshment training has been delivered to Force Incident Managers and to Duty Inspectors to reinforce the understanding of the risk factors relating to missing children. It is now mandated that all reports of missing children result in a safe and well check upon the child's return and this is to be actioned regardless of whether the report is ultimately recorded on the Sleuth database. All Missing person reports must result in either a Sleuth record (which should be done if a person is missing for more than 3 hours in any event) or in a Safeguarding Referral. In rare cases where the Force Incident Manager does not believe this is necessary, a full rationale must be recorded on the Storm incident log.

An internal review of missing children cases was commissioned to reassure the force that the measures introduced following the inspection have led to improvement. This review is now examining cases reported between February and April 2020 using the following test criteria –

- appropriate incident grading,
- timeliness and appropriateness of the response,
- identification and consideration of risk factors to the child and wider children,
- information and intelligence considered including research on previous missing occasions and on any person the child may be in contact with whilst missing,
- completion and quality of the safe and well check completed on their return,
- safeguarding measures completed,
- consideration of any criminal behaviour involved,
- accurate, relevant and timely recording.

The findings of the review will be used to identify thematic issues to address with further training, in addition to enabling individual feedback as required.

In relation to Recommendation 3 - *We recommend that, within three months, Durham Constabulary should improve its child protection and exploitation investigations, paying attention to: • allocating investigations to teams with the skills, capacity and competence to carry them out well; • improving the way cases are recorded, overseen and managed; and • sharing information with children’s social care services at the time that a risk to a child is known.*

In response to this recommendation, the Constabulary has agreed additional resourcing within Safeguarding Investigative teams. This is in addition to the resources already being implemented at the time of the Inspection. This includes increasing investigative assets by 8 investigators, 2 Detective Sergeants and 1 ARMS assessor.

This is in addition to the existing safeguarding resourcing uplift of:

- Strategy Team - increase of 3 Detectives
- Child Exploitation Team - increase of 2 Detectives
- Public Protection Unit - increase of 1 ARMs Assessor
- Complex Safeguarding team - increase of 1 Detective.

The Constabulary acknowledges that there is a requirement to increase further the capacity for Safeguarding investigations. This has been balanced with wider operational requirements to implement an improved force-wide response and investigative capability through more effective and coordinated shift patterns within the next 2-3 years.

In raising the competence levels within child protection and exploitation investigations, the Constabulary acknowledges the requirement for more experienced investigators which has posed challenges in recruitment and retention, reflected across policing nationally. The Constabulary continues with ICIDP and SCAIDP programmes. Having developed the capability to deliver both programmes internally, the Constabulary has a planned schedule to train investigators over the 24 months. Other specialist courses such as Child Death Investigation training and the introduction of improved training for witness assessments for children continues. The Pre Interview Planning and Preparation Assessment (PIPPA) training package improves upon ABELS training previously delivered and is scheduled for introduction into the force.

Ongoing awareness raising sessions also continue for all frontline officers through regular continuous professional development events which incorporate topics such as child exploitation, cumulative harm and the initial response to a child death.

In relation to improvements in how cases are recorded, overseen and managed, briefings are being delivered to all investigators which summarise key points of learning from the inspection and highlights the requirement to improve recording and management of cases. This briefing is being delivered by detective sergeants following cascade briefing from the Safeguarding Detective Superintendent to build responsibility for the required improvements at an operational level. Progress will be tracked through Monthly Performance Reviews and periodic Chief Superintendent-led deep dive reviews into any investigation which is older than 6 months. Durham Constabulary is also delivering cascade training to all investigators to introduce the recently agreed NPCC's Disclosure Strategy Document. The accompanying training session drives clear messages about ensuring clear lines of enquiry and investigative parameters and formulated from the outset of the investigation.

In relation to sharing information with Children's Social Care Services at the time that a risk to a child is known, this is a key learning point which is being delivered in the above mentioned briefing to all investigators. In relation to children being brought into custody, Custody officers and investigators have been briefed around their responsibility to account for any underlying risks posed to that child and particularly whether the child is being exploited. Similar messages have been delivered regarding any child who is reported missing. This has been underpinned by directions to consider cumulative risk and the wider risk posed to siblings and associates of the child who is being dealt with by the police. In relation to investigations involving online digital child abuse images, the Detective Inspector within the Digital Investigation team is working with the MASH Detective Inspector to agree a tiered approach to sharing information with relevant agencies. This includes agreement that as soon as children are identified to be living with a suspected perpetrator of abuse, either at the research or investigation stage, the case will be dealt with as high risk and prioritised by the Digital Investigation Team for both action and information sharing, thereby allowing a Strategy discussion to take place at the earliest opportunity. Where there is concern regarding any child as a result of online digital child abuse investigations, these will be recorded and shared as a Vulnerable Child report with relevant partners at the earliest opportunity.

In relation to Recommendation 4 - *We recommend that, within three months, Durham Constabulary ensures: • offences are investigated; and • all relevant information is properly recorded and made readily accessible in all cases where there are concerns about the welfare of children. Guidance to staff should include: • advice on what information they should record (and in what form) on their systems to enable good-quality decisions; and • an emphasis on the importance of ensuring that records are made promptly and kept up to date.*

One of the ways in which the Constabulary has responded to the recommendation that relevant information is properly recorded and made accessible has been to implement a revised process which improves accountability and recording for those children taken into police protection in accordance with Section 46 of the Children's Act. This involves improved tracking through the use of the incident logging system and greater involvement by the Police Strategy team with oversight from the Inspector rank.

The requirement to improve recording and rationale for cases involving children on the Constabulary's systems has been included in the briefings being delivered to all investigators which summarise key points of learning from the Inspection and highlight the requirement to