

# **National Child Protection Inspections**

## **2019 thematic report**

## 2. Summary

### **The role of leaders and leadership**

#### **Leadership, management and governance**

Nationally, the police's senior leaders and staff are clearly committed to protecting vulnerable children better. Returning to police forces we had previously inspected, we found that every force had made some progress in achieving better results for children at risk of harm.

However, we found that too often the priority placed upon protecting those who are vulnerable is not translating into better decisions being made when children in need of help and protection are encountered.

#### **Innovative work the police are doing to protect children**

We have found many examples of good, innovative work to protect vulnerable children. In Wales, the police are part of a programme to give early support to children exposed to ACEs.

ACEs are stressful events that occur during childhood, such as having a parent who is an alcoholic or abuses drugs. Children who have several ACEs are more likely to need substantial, continuous support. Although the approach is relatively recent research shows that, in these cases, there are benefits to intervening early in a way that recognises the root causes of vulnerability and the cumulative impact of trauma over time.

In England, the approach to early intervention isn't consistent. The new VKPP aims to address this by evaluating best practice. Its work would be helped by clear government recognition of the benefits of early intervention by people who understand trauma.

We are encouraged that the police are becoming more aware of the need to use child-centred approaches. In Camden, north London, the police have worked with partners to create the United Kingdom's first 'child house', known as the Lighthouse. Based on an Icelandic model, it is designed to help make sure children who have been sexually assaulted aren't further traumatised by the investigation of a crime.

The Lighthouse model provides medical, advocacy, social care, police and therapeutic support in one specially designed place. Setting it up has taken a lot of multi-agency work and investment. It is too early to assess its impact (and funding for this project has not yet been guaranteed), but the model has the needs of children at its heart.