

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 ON TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2015



PEEL: Police effectiveness 2015 (Vulnerability)

An inspection of Lancashire Constabulary



December 2015

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Vulnerability in numbers



Calls for assistance

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

Lancashire Constabulary

351

England and Wales

350

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

Lancashire Constabulary

17.7

England and Wales

15.8



Crime

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

Lancashire Constabulary

62.9

England and Wales

61.6

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

Lancashire Constabulary

-2.9%

England and Wales

+2.2%

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

Lancashire Constabulary

—

England and Wales

10.7%

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

Lancashire Constabulary

9.1%

England and Wales

10.0%

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

Lancashire Constabulary

-7.7%

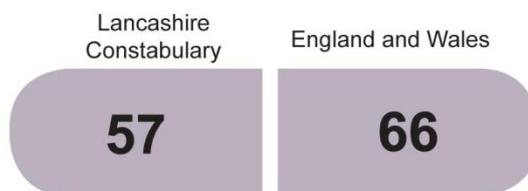
England and Wales

+20.8%



Domestic abuse arrest rate

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

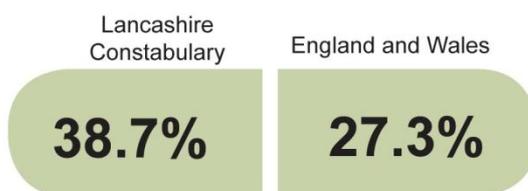


Charge rate

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

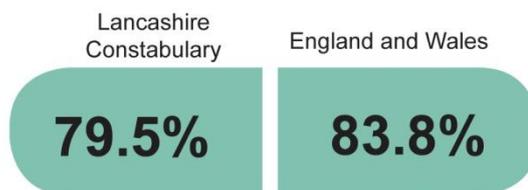


Domestic abuse charge rate as a percentage of all domestic abuse crimes recorded 12 months to 31 March 2015



Victim satisfaction rate

Victim satisfaction rate 12 months to 31 March 2015



***Lancashire Constabulary was not able to provide data for percentage of total crimes recorded as having a vulnerable victim.**

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 Lancashire Constabulary.

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

Summary



Good

Lancashire Constabulary effectively identifies vulnerable victims at the point of contact and responds appropriately to keep them safe from harm. Officers who are initially deployed to protect vulnerable victims have a good appreciation that safeguarding¹ vulnerable people is a priority for the constabulary. To build on this strength, better information about the range of support networks available could be given to victims by emergency response officers. Nevertheless, the constabulary's operational procedures to protect vulnerable people and support victims mean that HMIC judges Lancashire Constabulary as good.

The constabulary has well-established partnerships with other agencies to tackle child sexual exploitation. HMIC found evidence of dedicated teams in each of the constabulary's areas taking an effective lead in identifying cases of child sexual exploitation, safeguarding children and prosecuting offenders. Additionally, the constabulary has undertaken in-depth research into criminal networks who seek to victimise young people and has arrested perpetrators for using the internet to strike up relationships with potential victims. HMIC believes that the constabulary is in an advanced state of readiness to combat this threat.

Missing person investigations are well-managed, with good oversight of enquiries by supervisors. The constabulary provides a proportionate police response and nominated investigators are able to focus activities on investigating only those cases where the victim is perceived to be at greater risk of harm.

Domestic abuse service providers were complimentary about the support provided to victims by specialist units within the constabulary. Safeguarding of victims is a clear priority for staff across the constabulary.

At a broader level, a joint venture with partner organisations focusing on early action to identify and support vulnerable victims is making good progress. In the long term, the constabulary expects that victims who need the most help from public services will be identified more effectively. Thereafter they will be given the support they need to make them less susceptible to victimisation in the future.

¹ The term safeguarding means providing protection and support to ensure the safety of a vulnerable person and prevent further harm.

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

Lancashire Constabulary has good procedures in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims who request police assistance. Operators in the communications centre (called customer care assistants) are trained to identify vulnerability issues in callers. This includes gathering key information from callers to establish the circumstances of each case and assessing the level of risk to any person during each call.

Identifying those who are vulnerable

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.

Lancashire Constabulary uses a combination of the ACPO and VCOP definitions of vulnerability.

The proportion of crime recorded which involves a vulnerable victim varies considerably between forces, from 0.03 percent to 34.3 percent. 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. Lancashire was one of eight forces unable to provide data on the number of vulnerable victims at the time of data collection.

Assessing levels of risk and need

The receipt of 999/101 calls is managed on software known as System for Tasking and Operational Resource Management (STORM). This software retains information from previous incidents at those locations where there has been a police attendance involving vulnerable people. There is a facility to add markers to STORM to notify an operator if an address being input on a future occasion is known to have a vulnerable person present.

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, is available from www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/vulnerable-adults/

The presence of these markers will always prompt more detailed examination of previous calls to an address by the operator to inform their next actions. In this way, the constabulary can be sure that information in relation to previous police action can be re-evaluated during each new incident to re-assess the level of risk present.

In Lancashire, STORM is not configured to identify vulnerable callers by name. Nevertheless, we found that customer care assistants were establishing aspects of vulnerability by questioning callers and were interrogating constabulary IT systems to establish what is known about any persons involved. This means that customer care assistants are able to obtain a broad range of information from callers to determine the extent of their vulnerability and put in place the appropriate police response.

In order to justify rationale in their decision-making, each member of the communications centre has been trained in applying the national decision model.⁴ Staff are able to access further guidance through their own team leaders and police supervisors within the communications centre.

There are regular training opportunities for customer care assistants and the identification of vulnerability is a mandatory training module. We also found evidence that customer care assistants were being mentored by police officers who work in the force communications centre environment.

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

We were encouraged that the nature of a victim's vulnerability is being assessed by the force and referred, as appropriate, to multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) to provide a consistent service that best meet the victim's needs. In this way partner organisations from the statutory and charity sector work together to understand how best to implement care and support plans. As these working practices mature, services to victims are likely to improve incrementally.

We found that identifying the risks which domestic abuse victims faced was sound and the safeguarding of victims is a clear priority for staff across the constabulary.

The constabulary screens persons reported missing or absent for any indication that they might be at risk from child sex abusers, and its investigations are subject to strong supervision with risk assessments are frequently re-appraised.

We also acknowledge the constabulary's resolve to invest in new investigative teams and adjust operating procedures to ensure that emerging threats and the priority to support vulnerable victims are properly resourced.

⁴ The 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 later. It is composed of six key elements: the police code of ethics; gathering information; assessing threat and risk; considering powers and force policy; identifying options; taking action and reviewing outcomes.

These are bold decisions to make in the context of shrinking budgets and bear testament to the constabulary's commitment to protect the most vulnerable from harm. Examples include the:

- establishment of an online child abuse investigation team (in recognition of the growing risk of children being sexually exploited online);
- establishment of multi-agency, joint investigation and safeguarding teams to address child sexual exploitation; and
- adjustment of the remit of the economic crime team – a traditional remit of fraud investigation has been expanded to include abnormal withdrawals of cash from the bank accounts of people who may be susceptible to scams, such as the elderly.

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

We found that customer care assistants are sharing information about callers with officers deployed to an incident as they are en route to the scene. They then conduct a more detailed search of police intelligence systems for any further information about the caller. In this way officers are likely to be well-informed and in a good position to provide a service in line with the individual's needs.

Response officers

Officers attending an incident where any aspect of vulnerability is identified are expected to complete a risk assessment on vulnerable people. We found that risk assessment forms are being consistently completed by staff at the scene to determine the level of risk in each case. The risk assessment is then used by the attending officers to decide on the overall level of vulnerability and the nature of safeguarding to be applied in each case.

In particular, we recognise that the quality of risk assessments has improved since domestic abuse was inspected in 2014. At that time, a need for greater consistency and better supervision were identified as an area for improvement.

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.

Supervision of the response to vulnerable victims

Supervisors provide an active role in checking and approving the risk assessments of victims. We saw examples of supervisors reclassifying the assessment of persons reported missing to reflect their concerns about the circumstances of the disappearance.

We also found strong supervision of the work of tracking down individuals who evade arrest at the time of committing offences. Each day, a review of action is taken to locate high-risk domestic abuse offenders still at large. This is an effective measure in bringing offenders to justice swiftly and protecting vulnerable people from re-victimisation.

Risk assessments are submitted to police colleagues working with partner agencies in each of the three policing areas at multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs). These are then considered by the different agencies to see if there are any additional long-term safety measures that are required.

The constabulary has improved the completion and timeliness of domestic abuse and missing person risk assessments through the provision and use of mobile data technology. Officers are able to research force intelligence systems and complete risk assessments and missing person reports on portable electronic devices at scenes. A greater level of access to available intelligence allows officers to complete risk assessments more accurately. This means that officers are better placed to identify the individual needs of victims and instigate access to the most appropriate support that is available.

The constabulary has increased its capacity to recover important evidence when dealing with vulnerable victims. We found a significant investment in body-worn video cameras to record their actions at scenes. We also found that these devices are well-used and that officers had a positive perception in how this technology is supporting the gathering of evidence for prosecutions.

We found that front office enquiry staff recognise the importance of keeping vulnerable people safe when they attend police stations seeking help. Enquiry staff explained that their primary task is to offer immediate support and re-assurance to victims before notifying the communications centre to ask for an officer to be allocated to each victim.

Front office enquiry staff had received no training in dealing with vulnerable victims in person. Previous training provided had been predicated on supporting victims who contact police stations by telephone. Instead, they used their common sense to make judgments of risk and vulnerability based on questions asked to victims who attend police stations. The constabulary may wish to include such training in its curriculum both to support its staff and provide a better service to victims.

We found that officers are carrying out a good initial investigation in relation to cases where a person is reported missing. Officers are completing missing from home risk assessments and are mindful of the possibility of child sexual exploitation when young people are involved. These include exploring indicators of possible child sexual exploitation, such as unexpected gifts, extra money, secrecy, association with older individuals or groups and unusual sightings in vehicles. Officers were also aware of preventive measures that could be taken to safeguard children. These include the use of abduction notices⁶ which prevent adults from keeping the company of children in circumstances which give cause for concern.

How well does the force investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with partners to keep victims safe?⁷

The constabulary has identified that only 19 percent of calls it deals with are in relation to reports of crime, and that a significant proportion (48 percent) of its incident demand is taken up with dealing with public safety, anti-social behaviour and vulnerability issues. In order to reduce this demand, the constabulary has embarked on a programme to take early action with other public service agencies. The intention is to identify the members of the public who most frequently draw on public services (high-intensive users) and give them more focused, in-depth support.

The constabulary has implemented a plan of action to co-ordinate support across the different agencies to give these high-intensive users, many of whom are vulnerable, the help they need at the earliest opportunity. In applying this support to those in most need, the constabulary expects that these vulnerable people will be better protected. The vulnerable people will also be empowered to become more resilient to victimisation and less reliant on public services.

In order to develop the programme, the constabulary received a Home Office innovation fund grant of £4.3m. A key feature of the scheme is that one agency is nominated to co-ordinate all the interventions taking place to support members of the public accepted onto the early action scheme. The scheme is to be independently evaluated by the University of Central Lancashire in the near future to assess its effectiveness.

⁶ Section 2 harbouring notices are notices that can be administered to occupants of addresses where children may be visiting and may be considered to be at risk of harm when at that location. Under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984, a child can be prevented from being at particular premises without the express permission of the person with parental responsibility.

⁷ 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.

Working with partners

Partnership working arrangements to support police action are well-established at the multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) we visited in Blackpool and Accrington. We assessed a small number of referrals made to the hubs by officers in relation to vulnerable people. We found that each was well-supervised and shared information well with partner agencies. However, at both hubs there was a backlog of work in processing risk assessment referrals received from the police, which meant that risk assessments in relation to vulnerable people were not being reviewed on their arrival. We also found evidence of significant re-grading of some police referrals at the MASH in Blackpool. This was after the referrals had already been initially evaluated in the communications centre. This is over-bureaucratic and delays the service to victims.

Investigation of crime involving vulnerable people

We examined the case files of 40 investigations,⁸ of which 20 were identified as involving a vulnerable person. It was clear that crimes were allocated with the victim's needs in mind and consideration was given to the accreditation, abilities and experience of investigators.

There was also evidence of effective supervision, sergeants were clear about what they were expected to do, and deadlines and the lines of enquiries they had to complete are routinely recorded on crime reports.

Investigators we spoke to mentioned there is rarely time for their own professional development. HMIC believes the constabulary should make time and resources available for its staff's individual professional development in line with its stated commitment to the workforce.

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. The code sets out the service that victims can expect from all organisations, including the police, which have a role in the criminal justice system.

Officers we spoke to in Lancashire Constabulary felt that there is general acceptance that addressing the needs of the victim is an integral part of a successful investigation. Furthermore, good use is being made of victim management software which prompts investigators to apprise victims of developments in the case at the appropriate interval.

⁸HMIC 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.

There is an understanding among officers of victim personal statements.⁹ These statements make courts aware of the psychological impact of becoming a victim. However HMIC was made aware of some domestic abuse cases where officers had to be reminded by external domestic abuse professionals of the need to take these statements. Some officers also expressed a lack of conviction about the value of taking such statements. Similarly, offers of special measures for vulnerable victims, for example a facility to give evidence on a video-link rather than attending court, are not made consistently. In specialist investigative teams, the application of these important measures is more established, but elsewhere we found inconsistencies.

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

We found that reports of children who were notified to the police as absent, but not missing¹⁰ are being effectively managed by police officers within the demand reduction unit (DRU) in the communications centre. Supervisors within the DRU retain ownership of these cases for an initial 15-hour period. During this period, the reviewing supervisor manages the police response in line with available information and the perceived risk to the absent person. Constabulary guidance states that any person under 16 years of age cannot be classified as absent for more than 15 hours without being re-classified to missing. This prevents complacency and ensures that a full investigation is launched should a young person's absence remain unresolved.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

As absent cases are all initially managed within the DRU. Frontline staff deal with those cases causing most concern where an individual is known to be missing. This provides a proportionate police response and enables nominated investigators to focus activities on investigating only those cases where the victim is perceived to be at a greater risk of harm.

The constabulary also manages missing person investigations well, with robust processes for their ongoing scrutiny. These investigations are assigned to officers at the beginning of each shift as they come on duty. They will review previous action taken and continue enquiries throughout their tour of duty before handing over enquiries to another officer at the end of their shift. Staff can access shared databases to see previous referrals, activity, incident logs and intelligence to understand the family context. This is important in determining the future direction of the investigation.

We found that shift supervisors are reviewing and setting additional actions and regularly re-assessing each case to determine whether there is an increased level of risk concerning the missing person. In order to assist them in this task, the missing person database prompts supervisors, through electronic reminders, to remind them when a review is due.

Dedicated missing person co-ordinators on each area ensure the missing person database is maintained and updated regularly so that the system reflects the current position on missing person cases. However, HMIC found insufficient arrangements in place to provide cover should the co-ordinators be away from the workplace for any reason. This presents a risk to the constabulary in that the database is not being consistently updated with important information to inform lines of enquiry.

The constabulary has arrangements in place with The Children's Society across Lancashire to conduct interviews with missing and absent children on their return home. We discovered that there is a backlog of work in carrying out these interviews. Also, information obtained from a significant number of return home interviews is not being fed back into the constabulary in a way that allows it to understand fully all the available intelligence. This means that important information which could inform future investigations is not being submitted to missing from home co-ordinators in a timely manner. This is a high-risk area for the force as intelligence received from return home interviews may signal important lines of enquiry which could otherwise be overlooked. These interviews could also enable the constabulary to gain intelligence to identify people who may present a risk to young people.

Our inspection found that the data entry standards onto the missing person's database were in need of review. This would enable analysts to easily recover information to identify links to potential suspects who may be exploiting children particularly when the child has been reported absent.

Preparedness to tackle child sexual exploitation

The constabulary has made a good start in ensuring it is well-prepared to tackle child sexual exploitation. This inspection has focused on actions and activities the constabulary has taken 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, as these issues are covered in HMIC's rolling programme of child protection inspections.¹¹

The constabulary has established arrangements in place to identify young vulnerable victims; there are specialist child sexual exploitation teams on each of the force's areas. Detailed research has been carried out by the constabulary to direct activity towards organised crime groups that seek to sexually exploit children. The dedicated child sexual exploitation teams on each area have very close links to partner agencies, particularly children's social care. A twin track approach is taken to gain intelligence to identify child sexual abuse to prosecute offenders and also to protect children.

In April 2015, the constabulary implemented Operation Hera, which is an operation committed to protecting children from online sexual predators. A new online child abuse investigation team has been introduced to carry out investigations and arrest offenders who use the internet to target young and vulnerable victims. The operation has already been successful, with over 41 offenders arrested in the first three months of the initiative alone. Operations of this type provide strong indication of the constabulary's preparedness to proactively tackle child sexual exploitation.

Domestic abuse

In 2014, HMIC reported that Lancashire Constabulary's response to victims of domestic abuse was good. At this time we found that tackling domestic abuse was understood by staff as a priority within the constabulary and significant effort had been made in training frontline staff and specialist teams both to investigate perpetrators and safeguard victims.

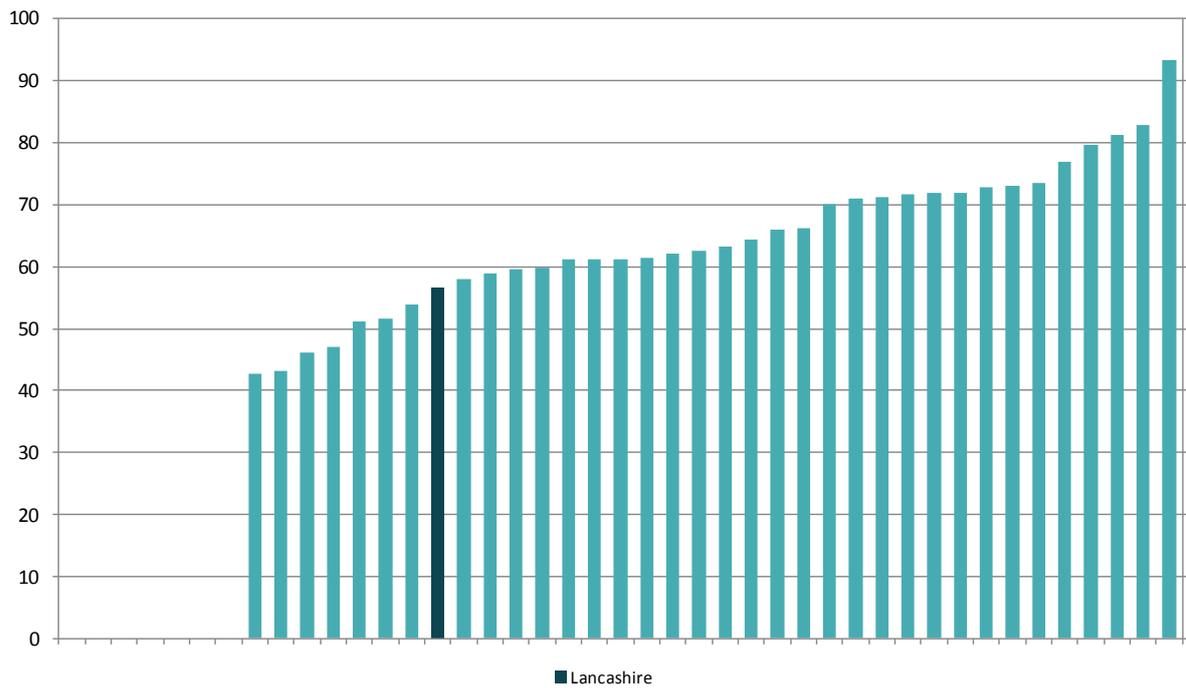
Against this positive backdrop, HMIC made nine recommendations in 2014 where the constabulary could strengthen operational practice further to safeguard victims and to manage offenders. The constabulary has accepted these recommendations and reports that they are all being addressed. HMIC's position is that the force should set out clear timescales to finalise these improvements and make sure that they become part of routine practice.

¹¹ HMIC's National Child Protection Inspections, available from: www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/our-work/child-abuse-and-child-protection-issues/national-child-protection-inspection/

In the 12 months to 31 March 2015, recorded domestic abuse decreased by 8 percent against the previous 12 months and accounted for 9 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.

As shown in figure 1, for every 100 domestic abuse crimes recorded Lancashire Constabulary made 57 arrests.

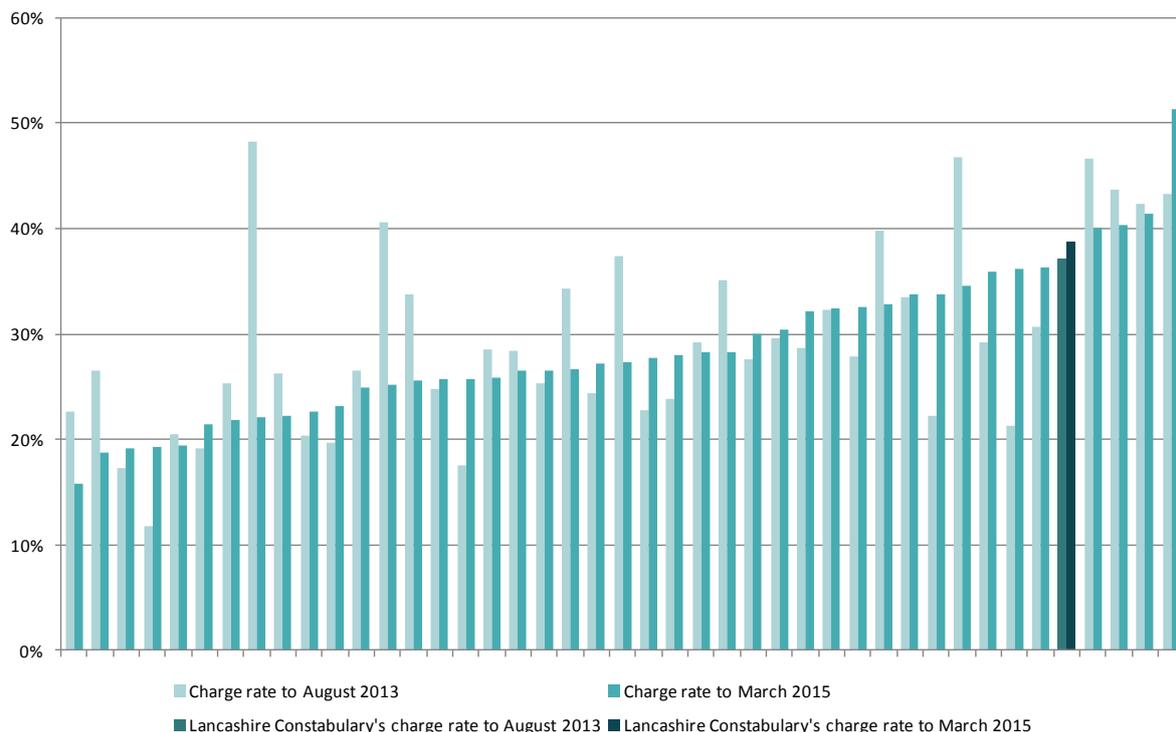
Figure 1: The number of arrests per 100 domestic abuse crimes by force, for the 12 months to 31 March 2015



Source: HMIC data return

The constabulary's charge rate for domestic abuse recorded crimes for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 was 39 percent, compared with 27 percent for England and Wales. This is an increase since the last HMIC domestic abuse inspection when the constabulary rate was 37 percent for the 12 months to 31 August 2013, compared with 30 percent for England and Wales.

Figure 2: Domestic abuse charge rate for the 12 months to 31 March 2015 compared to the 12 months to 31 August 2013



We found that the service provided to victims by officers in specialist teams was highly regarded by partner agencies we spoke to. We also found that there were good working arrangements between the police and independent domestic violence advisors. This was particularly evident in Chorley and South Ribble where partnership working between the police and domestic violence advisors seemed to be more closely integrated than elsewhere in the constabulary.

Summary of findings



Good

Lancashire Constabulary has made good progress in putting clear processes in place to identify repeat and vulnerable victims. The force makes accurate assessments of the risks they face and its response to them is consistent. HMIC judges the force's performance to be good.

The force works effectively with partner organisations. Multi-agency structures bring together a range of service providers from the statutory and charity sectors to consider risk and to provide tailored support to victims in Lancashire. The constabulary's proactive and continuous assessment of an individual's needs and its rapid devising of support programmes ensures it provides a good service to vulnerable people.

The force has invested in specialist teams with the sole remit of investigating child sexual exploitation cases. These teams have made headway in targeting organised crime groups whose objective is to coerce vulnerable young children into sexual activity.

The force has made progress in response to recommendations made by HMIC in 2014 regarding its approach domestic abuse. In particular the quality and supervision of its risk assessments have improved. The constabulary still has work to do to ensure that frontline officers understand the full range of safeguarding routes for domestic abuse victims for the constabulary to achieve performance that HMIC grades as outstanding. They also need to understand more about controlling and coercive behaviour in the context of domestic abuse.