

**DRAFT NOTES - SCRUTINY MEETING (CHILD PROTECTION AND CHILD EXPLOITATION) - 1 APRIL 2025**

Question	Brief Summary of Evidence	Decision of PCC
<p><b>1. In light of HMICFRS’s child protection inspection findings, published in January 2025, please can the following be provided:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>a brief overview of the immediate and ongoing actions taken by the Force to respond to HMICFRS’s causes of concern and subsequent recommendations; and</b></li> <li>• <b>with the work that is being undertaken, details of the expected impact and outcomes and when improvements will start to be seen in this area, including those expected from Op Unified.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To effectively safeguard children at risk, the Force’s approach focusses on governance, policy &amp; process, training &amp; development, communication, performance management and partnerships.</li> <li>• The Force’s approach links closely with the Chief Constable’s Strategic Plan Delivery Objective of protecting the most vulnerable from harm.</li> <li>• Since June 2024, the Force has undertaken a substantial amount of work to address the areas of concern and areas of improvement identified by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services (HMICFRS).</li> <li>• The Force’s improvement journey has included developing an improvement action plan, establishing a Harm Outside The Home (HOTH) Strategic Group, agreeing an Op Unified model (an approach to vulnerability and local investigations) and introducing a Tactical Vulnerability Performance Group.</li> <li>• In terms of governance:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An immediate improvement plan was developed and submitted during the HMICFRS inspection.</li> <li>• Governance arrangements have been improved at both a strategic and tactical level with weekly meetings of a Gold Group, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, and weekly meetings of a Silver Group, chaired by the Detective Chief Superintendent for Prevention and Safeguarding.</li> <li>• Terms of Reference have been reviewed to ensure the membership of each group includes representation from local policing teams.</li> <li>• In terms of strategic considerations, a new Tactical Vulnerability Performance Group and Missing Persons Delivery Group have been established to provide operational and tactical oversight. The information considered and discussed at these meetings is fed into the Safeguarding Governance Group and then the Force IMPACT Board.</li> <li>• The Public Protection Notice (PPN) Improvement Group now has an enhanced focus, ensuring safeguarding concerns are fully recorded and shared with partner agencies to inform a multi-agency response.</li> <li>• The submission of PPNs has improved and work is ongoing to improve the flow and exchange of information.</li> <li>• The Chief Officer Team (COT) receives weekly missing person progress updates to maintain oversight of these cases.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In terms of policy and process:</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b>Partly Assured</b></p> <p align="center"><i>The PCC commends the commitment and dedication of the Force in making immediate and ongoing improvements to safeguard children at risk. The PCC will continue to monitor performance in this area.</i></p>

- Immediate process changes have been introduced to drive prompt improvements, this includes a Missing Persons Investigation Team undertaking quality and assurance activities in respect of missing person risk assessments and online Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) cases being assigned to the Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) with a new dedicated Detective Inspector.
- A new Child First Strategy has been developed. The Child First Strategy is an approach that has been developed using evidence of what works to reduce children becoming engaged in criminal and antisocial behaviour, achieve positive outcomes, and create safer communities.
- The Force's online Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)/CSE investigation guidance has been reviewed.
- The Force's policy and guidance for responding to missing people has been reviewed and updated.
- The Force's Vulnerability Strategy and the 4P (prevent, pursue, protect, prepare) plans are being developed/enhanced in line with the new national strategy. The aim of the Vulnerability Strategy is to ensure the Force is providing the best policing service to effectively identify vulnerability, respond to it and work with others to prevent harm.
- The Force is refreshing its missing person problem solving plan.
- In September 2025, the Force will be implementing a new delivery model, Op Unified, to manage vulnerability and local investigations. This will support the aim of improving outcomes, providing a better service to victims of crime and improving staff wellbeing.
- The Force has developed a clear policy and has effective arrangements in place to respond to the sudden and unexpected deaths of children.
- In terms of training and development:
  - To improve the Force's response, immediate training has been delivered to the:
    - Force Control Room;
    - District Duty Officers;
    - Silver Commanders;
    - Response Inspectors; and
    - Frontline staff and supervisors.
  - The Force has mandatory Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all operational officers/staff and supervisors involved in the journey of a missing child.

- The Force has introduced CSA/CSE Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), who are based in local policing teams.
- Additional training has been delivered in respect of the Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Development Programme (SCAIDIP) and Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood (SUDC).
- Inputs have been provided at meetings of the Force IMPACT Board, regarding the lived experience of children and recognising the voice of the child.
- The POLIT SharePoint site has been updated to provide a better understanding of the investigation process.
- In terms of communication:
  - The Force has delivered a child-centred internal communications campaign.
  - The Force has ongoing corporate communications regarding its AWARE campaign. AWARE can be used in any context and provides signs to look out for, and be aware of, to identify early intervention and safeguarding opportunities. AWARE supports both the Voice of the Child and Voice of the Vulnerable Adult risk assessments within Cleveland Police. AWARE stands for:
    - A - Appearance
    - W - Words
    - A - Activity
    - R - Relationships and dynamics
    - E - Environment
  - To assist with safeguarding children at risk, the Force ensures that regular messages are circulated to staff via COT videos and daily news articles.
  - The Force has refreshed guidance on the use of appropriate language.
  - The Force has developed a bespoke package of support for victims of online CSA/CSE.
  - Internal and external online CSE communication campaigns are currently in development.
  - The Force is delivering External Safer Internet Day webinar sessions, which are hosted by the Force's Cyber Protect and Prepare Officers.
- In terms of performance management:
  - The Force is developing a new vulnerability performance framework to recognise and respond to vulnerability-related risks.
  - Force performance frameworks are being developed to improve the visibility of children in performance outcomes.

- New and enhanced PowerBi dashboards have been developed to monitor performance statistics and inform performance conversations at a strategic and operational level.
- The Force has developed a new recurring audit schedule, which focusses on quality.
- The Review and Assurance Team conduct monthly thematic audits.
- There is a weekly review of missing child risk assessments and daily dip sampling of high-risk missing persons across all local policing areas.
- The Force reviews/audits a sample of CSA and CSE investigations to help improve child protection arrangements.
- The results of audits are reported to Force governance groups to ensure that any learning is actioned.
- An officer/staff quality scorecard is being developed to drive improvement.
- The Force is continuing to work to improve the recording of ethnicity and demographic data.
- In terms of partnerships:
  - A Tees Initial Harm Outside of the Home (HOTH) Screening Tool has been developed. This Tees-wide risk assessment and screening tool is designed to help practitioners to recognise risk from outside a child or young person's home.
  - Arrangements for the Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing, Trafficked (VEMT) Practitioners Group (VPG) and Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) are being reviewed.
  - HOTH arrangements have been agreed on a Force-wide footprint and all four local authorities will have a consistent initial triage and risk screening process.
  - Safeguarding partners attend district morning meetings and are represented in Clear/Hold/Build (CHB) governance structures. CHB is a framework for bringing the tackling of serious and organised crime threats into neighbourhood policing.
  - Work is being undertaken to validate data quality relating to regulated and unregulated placements.
  - Work is being undertaken with local authority partners to improve return interview acceptance rates.
  - Guidance is being developed regarding the requesting and attending of strategy meetings.
  - An improved process has been developed for recording and updating strategy meetings.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To date, the Force's work in this area has secured improvements in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>risk assessment accuracy and quality</li> <li>reductions in missing children and reductions in repeat incident rates involving children; and</li> <li>successful investigation and prosecution of offenders.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. In light of the recommendations and the area of improvement referenced in the HMICFRS's 2023 report 'An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales', please could the Force provide an update in relation to progress made?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Force is making good progress with implementing the recommendations outlined in the report.</li> <li>The Force has recently submitted a progress update to HMICFRS.</li> <li>The Force is currently developing a problem profiles for CSE and CSA. The CSE profile will include an assessment of the nature and extent of group-based child sexual exploitation.</li> <li>The Force has received the Hydrant Programme's continuing professional development offer. The Force takes part in peer reviews, peer support, debriefs and CPD.</li> <li>The Force continues to take effective steps to eradicate victim-blaming language and regular audits of case files are undertaken.</li> <li>The Force continues to work with statutory safeguarding partners to review, promote and make sure that relevant group-based child sexual exploitation disruption and prevention initiatives are implemented effectively.</li> <li>The Force recognises the importance of outreach work to improve intelligence and target resources effectively.</li> <li>The Force is reviewing its Niche operational platform to ensure group-based child sexual exploitation can be identified.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. In terms of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and the increase in offenders aged 10 to 17, how can the Force and the OPCC work together to reduce child on child abuse and minimise the escalation of concerning sexual behaviours?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Around half of CSA offences in Cleveland are committed by children.</li> <li>The Force welcomes the opportunity to work alongside the OPCC to develop and enhance opportunities to work with partners to prevent and reduce offending and escalation. This work should focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improving the educational offer e.g. POL-ED;</li> <li>introducing specialist outreach resources;</li> <li>capturing the voice of young people;</li> <li>assisting in reducing exclusions from Teesside education establishments;</li> <li>continuing the prevention and education journey with partners; and</li> <li>developing a children's scrutiny panel.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

**Actions**

1	That the topic of Child Protection and Safeguarding be revisited by the PCC next year and that performance data, demonstrating the impact of the Force's work in this area, be presented.
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2	That, once finalised, a copy of the Force's CSE Problem Profile and the CSA Problem Profile be sent to the PCC/OPCC.
3	That a copy of the Force's progress update/report, regarding the implementation of recommendations associated with HMICFRS's 2023 publication on group-based child sexual exploitation, be sent to the PCC/OPCC.