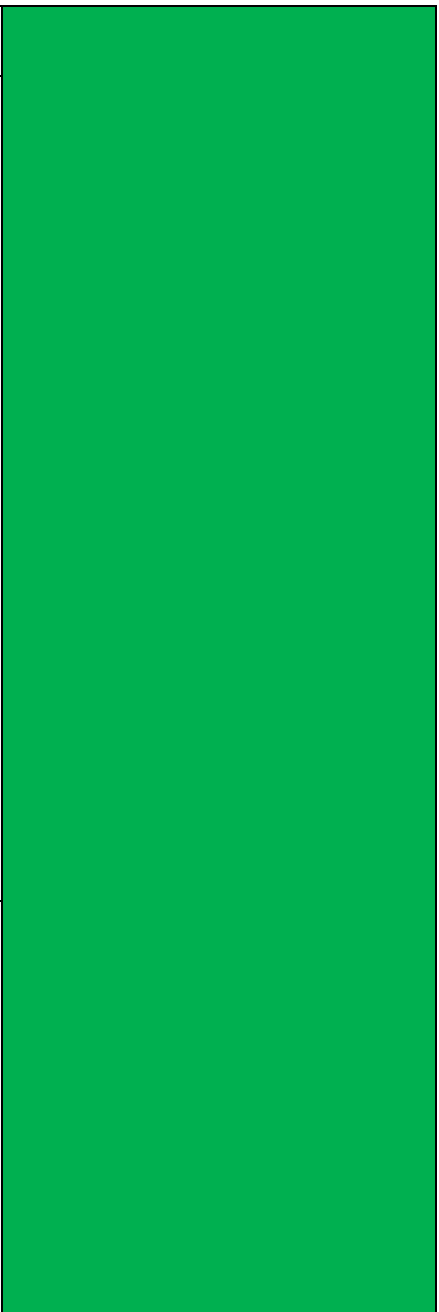


NOTES - SCRUTINY MEETING (CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING) - 30 APRIL 2026

Question	Brief Summary of Evidence	Decision of PCC
<p>1. What overall evidence and performance data demonstrate measurable progress since the January 2025 NCPI, particularly in improving outcomes for children?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of the Force’s progress against the 2025 National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI), all causes of concern identified by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have been fully addressed, completed and closed. Likewise, all five areas for improvement have been completed and closed. Approximately 70 actions were recorded in total, and every action has now been signed off. • The following indicators demonstrate clear and measurable improvements in outcomes for children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased solved crime rates, including a 2.4 percentage point rise in solved rape offences • Better quality risk assessments, as evidenced by qualitative audit findings • Reduction in repeat missing children, down 12.0% • Decrease in the time taken to locate a missing child, down 14.2% • More timely investigations, with time to charge reduced by 9.6% • High compliance levels for safeguarding referrals, achieving an 89% compliance rate • High levels of attendance at strategy meetings, with 96% attendance • Improved crime recording standards, including a 30 percentage point increase in the accurate recording of child ethnicity (three years ago this figure was 58%, it is now 88%). 	<p align="center">Assured</p> <p><i>The PCC was assured by the information submitted by the Force, noting that the positive work undertaken to address the issues highlighted in the HMICFRS NCPI is already having a meaningful impact. The PCC recognises, however, that this remains a critical area of focus and will require continued monitoring. To maintain effective oversight and ensure that the positive direction of travel is sustained, the PCC will request a further performance update next year.</i></p>
<p>2. What data demonstrates an improved police response to missing children, including faster response times, better risk assessments, and reduced harm for high-risk or repeat-missing children?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to reports of missing children requires a suite of indicators rather than a single measure. The Force has developed an internal baseline to provide meaningful assurance and track progress over time, as national comparisons remain limited and historical. • The following indicators demonstrate the progress achieved to date: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9.5% reduction in incidents involving missing children • 12.0% reduction in repeat missing incidents • 14.2% reduction in the time taken to locate a missing child • 21.5% reduction in the time taken to locate a child missing from care • Examples of the Force’s performance-improvement activity include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened processes within the Force Control Room (FCR) to ensure vulnerable and missing children are consistently identified, risk assessed, and safeguarded. This includes enhanced FCR-guided prompts that capture the voice of the child, exploring factors leading to the missing episode, and ensuring that when a child returns before deployment, officers still review the underlying reasons. • Completion of an analytical Problem Profile and development of evidence-based problem-solving plans to target key risks and themes. 	

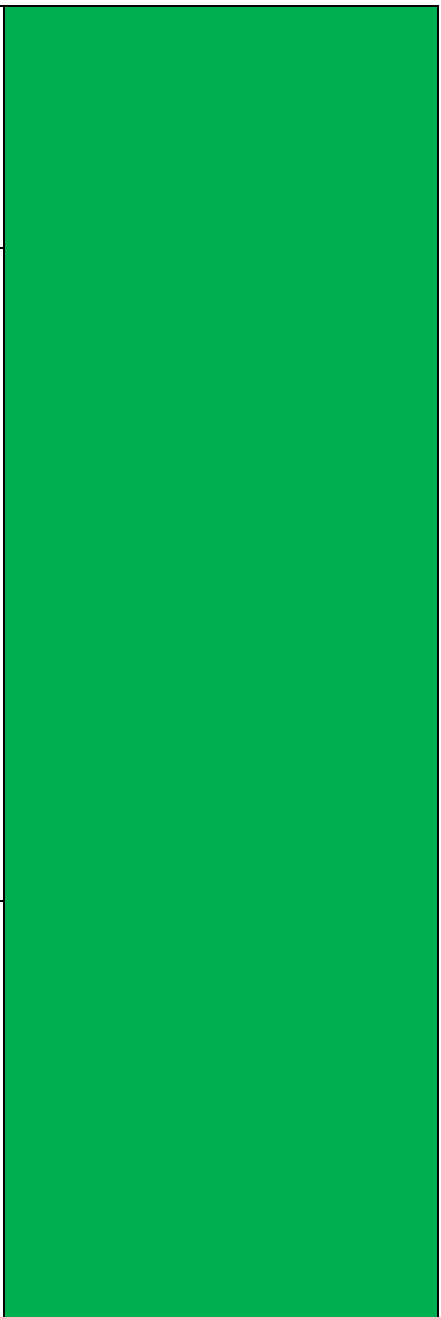
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced scrutiny and accountability through the Missing Persons Delivery Group, which reports directly into the Safeguarding and Vulnerability Governance Group. • A robust review and assurance framework, comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A multi-agency Missing Scrutiny Panel • Quality-assurance dip samples undertaken by the Missing Team • Thematic reviews facilitated by Corporate Services • Increased partnership engagement, including monthly meetings with care homes to strengthen joint safeguarding responses. • Proactive review of active missing children throughout the day at command-led district morning meetings and Pacesetters (daily operational briefings), ensuring timely oversight and intervention. • Weekly Chief Office Team (COT) performance oversight of missing children risk levels, maintaining senior-level visibility and accountability. 	
<p>3. What evidence shows improved effectiveness and sufficient specialist capacity in online CSE investigations, including investigation timeliness, stronger risk assessments, offender risk-management, and better support for affected children and families?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Crime Agency (NCA) continues to send increasing volumes of intelligence packages relating to Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSAE) to local forces. Currently, 31% of these require a safeguarding response. This rising demand, highlighted through the Force Management Statement (FMS) process, has led to a request for additional team growth, which is now under regional and national consideration. • Investigation timeliness remains a challenge. CSAE investigations take significantly longer than other crime types due to their complexity and the sensitive nature of the offences. Progress is further impacted by the fact that 77% of online offenders are based overseas, creating additional delays and barriers. • The Force continues to prioritise process streamlining, collaborative opportunities, and staff wellbeing to ensure the team can manage increasing demand while maintaining high investigative standards. Workload pressures remain high and are recorded on the Force Risk Register, with a wellbeing plan in place to support staff. • An end-to-end risk-management process ensures all contact is recorded and that ongoing support is provided throughout the investigation. • Regular supervisory reviews ensure effective management of ongoing risk, with a strong focus on offender management and safeguarding. • Victims and their families receive enhanced support, including tailored information, bespoke resources, and signposting to specialist services designed specifically for child victims and their families. • Significant investment has been made in upskilling the wider force, improving understanding of CSAE and strengthening investigative quality. For example, training for response officers has focused on developing a deeper understanding of cumulative risk factors and the specific impact of CSAE on children. • Robust dashboard reporting supports crime-data integrity and accurate crime recording. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Protection Notice (PPN) information is accurate and sufficiently detailed to enable partners to determine appropriate action
<p>4. What performance data demonstrates that risk assessments and safeguarding referrals are now more accurate, timely, and consistent across the Force?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Force has implemented a range of measures to strengthen the scrutiny of risk assessments and improve the timeliness and consistency of safeguarding referrals. These measures include bespoke training inputs, daily review processes, reality-testing activity, and multi-agency review arrangements. Greater transparency and the enhanced use of performance data, combined with 'close-to-practice' supervisory oversight, have driven sustained improvements in quality and compliance. This is reflected in the Force's performance data and corroborated by recent audit findings. For safeguarding referrals (PPN submissions - Domestic Abuse only), timeliness is strong: emergency incidents achieve 92% within 24 hours and 95% within 48 hours, priority incidents achieve 91% within 24 hours and 95% within 48 hours. Priority 24-hour incidents show 60% compliance within 24 hours (where appointments are made, the time between incident creation and victim contact can be extended hence lower compliance rate) but rise to 91% within 48 hours. Across safeguarding audits and wider compliance measures (all child concerns), PPN child-concern compliance stands at 89% over the past 12 months. Crime Data Integrity (CDI) compliance is 96% in the latest audit (February 2026) and 92% over the last 12 months. The Force was highlighted in HMICFRS's 2026 spotlight report on the policing response to online child sexual abuse and the management of registered sex offenders. The report's case study shows how the Force has strengthened information-sharing with children's social care through clearer processes and closer partnership working, resulting in more timely, consistent referrals and quicker safeguarding decisions that better protect vulnerable children.
<p>5. What evidence shows that investigations involving vulnerable children are now being completed more quickly, to a higher standard, and with improved outcomes for victims?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earlier approaches placed more emphasis on compliance and performance, and while safeguarding was always an important consideration, its focus has now been significantly strengthened. The Force has refocused its priorities so that safeguarding is the primary focus, reflecting a renewed and enhanced commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals. For investigations involving vulnerable children, the average time to charge has improved, cases with child victims now reach charge decisions 22 days faster for both all crime categories and for rape offences (data relates to the 12 months ending March 2026). Recognising the increasing investigative demand and the pressure on child protection capabilities, the Force has implemented structural changes to strengthen its safeguarding response. The establishment of the Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) command enhances organisational focus and capacity to protect vulnerable children.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation Unified has introduced a centralised model for rape and child abuse investigations, supported by specialist supervision and enhanced safeguarding oversight. • The Force is addressing the key causes of investigative delay by improving frontline supervision, strengthening investigative ownership and embedding data-driven performance management and quality assurance focused on investigation timeliness, victim engagement, supervisory activity and investigative outcomes. • Performance insight is now used proactively to drive service improvement. For example, at the January meeting of the Safeguarding and Vulnerability Governance Group, significant delays in pre-charge rape investigations were identified, leading to the launch of Operation Magpie. While initially focused on rape investigations more broadly, further analysis at the Tactical Vulnerability Performance Meeting showed that the longest delays involved offences against child victims. As a result, Magpie has now shifted its primary focus to stalled child rape investigations, reflecting the Force's commitment to addressing this critical area. 	
<p>6. What measurable improvements can you evidence in multi-agency safeguarding activity, including information-sharing, attendance, joint decision-making, and partner feedback?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive leadership and oversight of partnership activity is now provided through a dedicated PVP Partnership Detective Chief Inspector and Detective Inspector, ensuring clear ownership, strong accountability and a clear strategic direction. • Stronger collaboration has been enabled through the co-location of internal resources, such as Harm Outside The Home (HOTH), missing investigation and problem-solving teams and improved join up across commands. For example, HOTH officers now attend Local Policing Area (LPA) morning meetings alongside partners, helping to remove barriers and reduce siloed working. • Work is underway to improve the consistency of multi-agency practices and strengthen partnership pathways, including the development of common referral processes and shared screening tools. • Attendance at strategy meetings remains consistently high, with a visible police presence that demonstrates strengthened commitment, shared ownership and a more coordinated approach to safeguarding. Over the three months to January 2026, the Force achieved a 96% attendance rate at strategy meetings, demonstrating a strong and consistent commitment to effective multi-agency safeguarding. • Child-centred, risk-led partnership forums, such as the 'engine room' structure, provide joint oversight and clearer decision-making, supported by visible police leadership. • Co-location with partner agencies at the 'front door' enables joint screening and a shared understanding of risk. Further work is ongoing to establish Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT) to enhance this approach. • Continuous learning is embedded through the use of independent inspections (such as Joint Targeted Area Inspection - JTAI) and local review activity, including rapid reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, multi-agency audits and active learning processes, ensuring that organisational learning is captured and acted upon. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parenting orders, applied for by local authorities, are a valuable tool and can help reduce risk by setting clear expectations for parents and supporting better outcomes for children and young people. • The Force's work has strengthened partnership working and now supports more effective triaging of cases, collaborative problem-solving, early engagement and improved information sharing, all of which help to reduce risk and enhance the overall response to protecting children at risk of harm.
<p>7. What data or audit findings demonstrate strengthened leadership oversight of child protection and clearer accountability for safeguarding performance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force has a governance structure in place to ensure strong and consistent strategic oversight of child protection and clearer accountability. • A Gold Group was established to oversee the improvement work associated with the NCPI, this activity is now fully managed through business-as-usual processes. • The Force's Strategic Plan places a clear emphasis on vulnerability and strengthening its response to protecting children at risk of harm. • Issues relating to child protection and safeguarding are fully embedded within local performance discussions at both team and individual levels. These discussions feed into the Monthly PVP Performance Meetings, which in turn report to the Tactical Vulnerability Performance Group, chaired by the Chief Superintendent (Head of Safeguarding and Prevention). This group also receives information from the Missing Persons Delivery Group, among others. The Tactical Vulnerability Performance Group reports directly into the Child Protection (NCPI) Action and Delivery Plan, which is underpinned by the Vulnerability Strategy and the Child Strategy. The plan then feeds into the Safeguarding and Vulnerability Group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable, before progressing to the Force IMPACT Board, the Force GAIN Board, and ultimately the Executive Management Board. • Each of the four local policing area Safer Children's Partnerships operates a tiered governance structure, with the Force represented at every level.
<p>8. What steps is the Force taking to provide transparent assurance to the public that child protection has improved since the January 2025 NCPI report?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the NCPI improvement plan, the Force has delivered a range of external-facing communications designed to increase transparency, strengthen safeguarding partnerships, raise public awareness of risk, and improve access to support for children and families. Key activity includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of the Child First Strategy (2025-2028) • Delivery of external awareness campaigns focused on risk, safety and early intervention • Targeted messaging and campaign materials shared with schools, governors, parents and carers • An external public-facing website to improve visibility and access to support • Participation in national events such as Safer Internet Day to promote online safety and resilience



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think Vulnerability' is the Force's priority brand, bringing together all strands of vulnerability work across the organisation, including its response to the NCPI inspection. This umbrella brand strengthens the visibility and importance of vulnerability-related activity by creating a unified narrative, shared data sets, and coordinated behaviour change campaigns. It encompasses existing initiatives such as the AWARE (Appearance, Words, Activity, Relationships and dynamics and Environment) campaign to identify early intervention and safeguarding opportunities, alongside national assets linked to child criminal exploitation, sexual abuse, and missing children. The campaign has clear, measurable objectives, with tactics that will be adapted as insights develop. The Force's aims are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate and inform the workforce about vulnerability through multiple strands of communication, building a culture where safeguarding becomes everyone's responsibility. • Launch a recognisable brand that puts a spotlight on vulnerability. • Use a wide range of internal and external communication channels to deliver messaging that helps prevent and reduce the exploitation and victimisation of vulnerable people. 	
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Actions

1.	That the Force's NCPI action plan be sent to the PCC/OPCC.
2.	That the PCC/OPCC receive a briefing (either verbal or written) outlining the key findings and implications of Operation Magpie.