Cumbria Office of Police and Crime Commissioner

**Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections of Cumbria Constabulary published by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

*Section 33 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days.*

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| **Inspection Title:** | Child Protection Inspections 2019 Thematic Report |
| **Date Published:** | February 2020 |
| **Key Findings** | |
| This is HMICFRS second thematic child protection report. The first, in 2015, showed that despite clear commitment and some progress much more needed to be done to ensure that all children in need of help and protection received the right help at the right time. This follow-up inspection bas found improvements in the service received by children at risk. HMICFRS found that signs of vulnerability are more effectively recognised, and the assessment of risk is generally better. They also found that, broadly speaking, partnership working has matured and the quality of multi-agency planning and decision making has improved, This has resulted in improvements in the outcomes for some, though not all, of the most vulnerable children.  Whilst HMICFRS found that the police and other agencies have been working hard to improve their responses to children in need of help and protection, they did find that in many cases progress is too slow. Their inspections continue to find many of the same problems challenging forces and their partners again and again. This is in large part because the approaches of the police and their partners continue to be reactive with decisions based on the most recent incident. Too little emphasis is placed on identifying underlying issues or the cumulative impact on a child of multiple repeated instances of trauma.  The demands faced by the police are increasing constantly. The police along with other public sector agencies are facing increasing challenges in meeting these demands. The current reactive approach of the police and partners that too often places an excessive emphasis on the management of demand as opposed to the reduction of risk is unsustainable.  In the report, HMICFRS made six recommendations to the police and other bodies. | |
| **Recommendations:** | |
| • We recommend that chief constables take steps to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children. Such steps could include (but don’t need to be limited to) considering fully a child’s circumstances when making decisions; more effective use of legislation to discontinue prosecutions not in the public (or child’s) interest; the development of more effective non-criminal justice pathways for vulnerable children who commit lower level crimes.  • We recommend that chief constables should review performance management and quality assurance approaches to ensure that assessments of the nature and quality of decision making are routinely made. The purpose of this would be to reinforce the understanding that compliance with policy or process is only one part of effective practice.  • We recommend that chief constables on those forces not yet inspected by the NCPI or JTAI take steps to identify and implement good practice and the learning highlighted from these programmes. This may include engaging with those forces who have been inspected, direct contact with the HMICFRS child protection lead or participating in a regional or national learning event. | |
| **PCC & Chief Constable Response to Report and Recommendation:** | |
| Both the Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable welcome the findings in HMICFRS second thematic child protection report. The Police & Crime Commissioner “Child protection is a key priority for the Constabulary who work with various partners agencies, community groups and members of the public to keep children safe from harm.  “A lot of the work the police do to protect children and young people may not necessarily be visible but I can reassure the public that important work is always ongoing to protect and safeguard the most vulnerable people in our county. The Constabulary has recently introduced new measures that recognise all children as children first, with emphasis on prevention and early intervention, and supporting the unnecessary criminalisation of children.  “I will continue to support and hold the Chief Constable to account for progress against the national recommendations through my Public Accountability Conferences (PAC) and my weekly one-to-ones with the Chief Constable.”  The Chief Constable, “We have recently introduced Child Centred Policing Teams within the Local Focus Hubs throughout Cumbria, with a primary aim to intervene early and prevent harm to children and young people to help improve their lives within our communities.  “This new approach will help to prevent the unnecessary criminalisation of children, taking into consideration the views of the victim, public safety and addressing the root cause of behaviour. The Child Centred Policing Teams will also support frontline officers and ensures positive engagement and opportunities are sought in order to improve our relationship with children and young people.” | |