Cumbria Office of Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

**Cumbria Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) 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:** | #29779 –An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies’ response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales |
| **Date Published:** | 08/12/23 |
| **Type of Inspection:** | National Thematic |
| **Key Findings** | |
| On 21 March 2022, the then Home Secretary, the Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, wrote to HMICFRS, requesting an inspection under section 54 (2B) of the Police Act 1996.  The terms of reference asked HMICFRS to inspect the police and other law enforcement bodies in England and Wales and consider how effectively they respond to victims and perpetrators of group-based child sexual exploitation. HMICFRS were also asked to assess how their responses influence investigations and the ways in which they safeguard children.  During HMICFRS’ inspection, they focused on three broad areas:  The nature and scale of offending.  The police’s attitude towards victims.  The quality of investigations and wider outcomes.  During September and December 2022, HMICFRS fieldwork took place in six police forces in England and Wales, two regional organised crime units and the NCA.  This report sets out our findings. | |
| **Recommendations and Areas for Improvement:** | |
| Recommendation - By 31 December 2024, all chief constables should make sure that their forces have problem profiles for child sexual exploitation, each of which should include an assessment of the nature and extent group-based child sexual exploitation. This should include relevant data from local partner agencies and should be updated frequently, at least annually.  Recommendation - By 31 December 2024, all chief constables and the relevant business user groups for police record management systems should make sure there are sufficient measures in place to identify group-based child sexual exploitation.  Recommendation - With immediate effect, all chief constables should take effective steps to eradicate victim-blaming language in their forces.  Recommendation - By 30 June 2024, all chief constables of forces that are yet to receive the Hydrant Programme’s continuing professional development offer should arrange it.  Area for Improvement (AFI) - All chief constables should work with their statutory safeguarding partners to review, promote, and make sure that relevant group-based child sexual exploitation disruption and prevention initiatives are implemented effectively in their forces. This should include consideration of options such as the advice given in the Home Office disruption toolkit and an Operation Makesafe (a national police initiative to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation in the business community) type of approach. | |
| **PFCC & Constabulary Response to Report and Recommendation:** | |
| The Constabulary and I welcome the inspection by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) relating to the effectiveness of police and law enforcement bodies’ response to group-based child sexual exploitation.  Through regular discussions with Chief Constable, Rob Carden, I am aware of the Constabulary’s commitment and passion in reducing and preventing CSE within Cumbria and take the recommendations and AFI seriously. The Constabulary has so far implemented the following to address the recommendations/ AFI in the report.  The Constabulary have completed a Problem Profile for CSEA this year – 2024. This will enable the Force to further understand and develop a more accurate picture of the nature and extent of the problem of CSE across Cumbria so that it can effectively commission services and identify training requirements for its staff.  The Constabulary is also reviewing how it records CSE crimes on its crime management system. This will further develop the current measures in place to identify group based CSE.  CSEA is part of the Constabulary’s 4P tactical assessment plan, which is reviewed monthly via ‘Force Tasking & Co-ordination Group’ (TCG) and is updated in response to pursue, protect, prevent, and prepare.  We are aware that the identification of group-based offending is a national issue and have worked with the Op Hydrant Team to discuss key learning points and AFIs moving forward. I understand the Constabulary has also directed questions within the Knowledge Hub, ‘Group-based CSE offending working group’, to review whether other forces are performing specific analysis that Cumbria could potentially replicate and capture locally.  The Constabulary have confirmed that they have met with relevant bodies from Op Hydrant to organise Hydrant’s Continuing Personal Development offer, however unfortunately Op Hydrant had no availability until April 2024. Although, it was confirmed to the Force that training would be free of charge, and that Op Hydrant can have 30 delegates per session. The Force have confirmed that work is still ongoing in relation to this to identify the correct staff/dates/venue and will organise.  Over recent months the Constabulary has delivered extensive and significant training to officers across the Force and at all levels to eradicate usage of victim-blaming language. It has recently published advice and guidance to front line officers across a wide range of platforms. An interactive session, ‘NWGs Mind Your Language’, highlighting the impact the use of language has on an individual’s ability to effectively safeguard a child was also circulated to all Sergeants and Inspectors in November 2023. This was then further shared with officers who they commanded. Additionally, the Constabulary’s Child Centre Policing Team have provided inputs around ‘Voice of the Child’ and ‘Mind Your Language’ (including NWG guidance) to student officers. Currently, a video is being prepared that will later be shared with officers regarding Voice of the Child and Mind Your Language. Further to this, the Constabulary’s Safeguarding Hub has reviewed all safeguarding reports and where there is inappropriate language or terminology used, this is then highlighted, where feedback is then provided to the officer along with the Mind Your Language NWG guidance.  It is mine and the Constabulary’s shared responsibility and intention to ensure that all officers and staff understand the threat of CSE and play their part in minimising harm by working in partnership to disrupt and deter this from occurring in Cumbria. I am assured that the Constabulary works effectively with statutory safeguarding partners in relation to CSEA. For example, there is a Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership MET (Missing, Exploited, Trafficked) subgroup, where one of the functions for members is to identify where there are gaps in the provision to inform commissioning of services and prevention initiatives.  The CERAR (Child Exploitation Risk Assessment and Review) process is Cumbria's multi-agency approach to child exploitation assessment and review process, which has been embedded in Cumbria for some time now. Both local authorities in Cumbria have introduced complex Safeguarding Teams which chair multi-agency risk assessment meetings in relation to CE and provide intervention work with children and families who are classed as high and medium risk of CE. I am assured that the Constabulary's safeguarding teams and METCO (missing, exploited and trafficked coordinator officer) teams work closely with these and utilise the Home Office disruption toolkit when creating risk management plans and disruption plans.  Multi Agency Child Exploitation meetings are held monthly, and potential perpetrators of CE are identified and discussed within this forum. Where associations are identified Mapping meetings are held with agencies to identify group-based offending and/or peer to peer exploitation.  Lastly, the Force is launching Operation Makesafe in March 2024 to coincide with National CE Day. We hope that this ultimately provides a solid platform to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation in the business community within Cumbria. | |