


PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version:

Force	Staffordshire
Police and Crime Commissioner	Ben Adams
Chief Constable	Chris Noble
Title of inspection	Staffordshire national child protection reinspection 2023
Inspectorate	 <p>His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services</p>
Summary of inspection	<p>Staffordshire Police has made progress in some of the areas where we made recommendations after our 2021 inspection. These improvements are mostly in the force's governance and specialist support arrangements. The force should continue to consolidate this improved practice, including developing its qualitative performance information.</p> <p>But more improvement is still needed, particularly in the quality of child protection investigations. We found that officers and supervisors aren't focused on effective investigations to safeguard children and bring offenders to justice. The FCC's processes and decisions aren't consistently sending the right help at the right time to vulnerable missing children and children at risk of domestic abuse. Some of the force's information sharing and risk assessment processes are inefficient, ineffective and confused.</p> <p>Underlying this is ineffective supervision. The force has clear policies, and it trains the workforce to capture the VoC and to record information about children's ethnicity and cultural heritage. But police personnel still don't routinely record this information on the force's systems. Supervisors and managers don't rectify the situation as they should. And the force's leaders haven't addressed it either. We have issued a further recommendation as a result.</p>
Grade	
Recommendations	<p>We recommend that Staffordshire Police immediately improves the consistency of its workforce's recording of ethnicity and cultural heritage.</p> <p>However, the force hasn't made enough progress against our three recommendations to improve its initial contact with vulnerable children.</p> <p>The force has made progress towards achieving our recommendation for improving its practices when children are taken into police protection. But further improvements in inspectors supervision of decision-making are still needed.</p> <p>Some improvements have been made to the way the force responds to children in custody. But further improvements are needed before the recommendation is met in full.</p>
Areas for improvement	

Police Crime and Commissioner's initial response

Commissioner Ben Adams welcomes the child protection re-inspection which has highlighted the progress made since the 2021 inspection

However, the persistent themes around information sharing, supervision and quality of data recording are common to other areas of activity across the force and form part of my robust holding to account processes. It is vital that the force takes steps to improve supervision, leadership and accountability across the organisation.

Chief Constable's response

The re-inspection was carried out in March, after an initial inspection in 2021 found systemic failings and made 15 recommendations for improvement. We have been working diligently through these recommendations, and following their latest visit, inspectors found that in some areas we have significantly improved the way we protect children.

Following the initial inspection, we developed a comprehensive action plan to improve our services to children which means the following are now more effective:

- structure and leadership of child protection, with officers who have significant experience and expertise overseeing all aspects of child protection
- development of a detailed performance framework that shows how well our approach to child protection is being delivered
- training focused on spotting signs of neglect, hearing and recording the voice of a child, and how to gather evidence from children using a trauma-informed approach
- use of IT systems, so that our staff have access to the information and resources they need to complete their duties
- contribution to multi-agency child protection arrangements
- responses to online child sexual abuse by investing in more staff, and reviewing and developing our processes
- management of registered sex offenders, and this team received direct praise from the inspection team

However, there were a number of areas identified in the initial inspection that we were still working on at the time of the re-inspection. Consequently, issues were still present, which we fully accept and recognise there is still more to be done on the following:

- the quality of our child protection investigations
- risk assessment and allocation of responses by our contact centre
- responses to children reported missing from home
- the accuracy of recording details of children's ethnicity and cultural heritage
- our processes to assess and share information with other organisations to help protect children

We are committed to improving our child protection services, and addressing the issues raised in our previous inspection which was noted by HMICFRS who saw our detailed action plan. They also consistently commented on the dedication and passion of everyone they met during their time with

us. They can see there is a clear desire from all of us to be outstanding in our approach to child protection.

We are on a journey which will take time as there are a number of complex areas that we are working on. However, we have made a number of positive changes to improve how we protect vulnerable children which is encouraging to see. There is nothing in the report that we weren't aware of, and we knew that some of this work would not be completed by the time of the re-inspection.

The force has made real progress, some of which have been highlighted in the media recently, in a number of high-profile cases which demonstrate our commitment to protecting children and bringing offenders to justice, but we accept that we have more to do and that's exactly what we're doing.

Prior to the final publication of the report, HMICFRS confirmed that 6 of the 15 original recommendations (1, 2, 3, 8, 12 and 14) are indeed complete.

Police Crime and Commissioner's overall comments

I intend to continue monitoring progress against the Staffordshire Police updated action plan at our regular governance meetings and will challenge the Chief Constable about progress against the specific themes identified in this report at the Public Performance Meeting in November 2023.