

Committee(s): Strategic Planning and Performance Committee	Dated: 6 th February 2023
Subject: Child Protection - Deep Dive	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of: Commissioner of Police Pol 26-23	For Information
Report author: Det. Supt. Richard Waight, Head of Investigation Services, Specialist Operations	

Summary

At the Strategic Planning and Performance Committee in November 2022, Members requested a 'Deep Dive' report on Child Protection to come to a future meeting. This report is to update Members on the current child protection services delivered by the City of London Police (CoLP) supported by local authority, regional and National partners.

Child protection is the safeguarding of children from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. It is a responsibility that must be shared between all those who work with, care for, educate and support children of all ages. Police are often considered as the frontline response to social problems including child protection. This requires professional judgement to decide whether a child is at risk of significant harm and whether to use the powers of protection, conferred on them by the Children Act 1989.

Child protection spans many aspects of policing response and is a key victim priority. Any child protection case is referred to the CoLP Public Protection Unit (PPU) which works closely with Children's Social Care (CSC), working to defined processes to deliver effective safeguarding outcomes. This report will summarise the police response in the following areas:

- Referral
- Investigation
- Monitoring

The report will also provide oversight of strategic governance, independent scrutiny, the resource available to the CoLP and a summary of current demand.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Governance & Local Monitoring

1. Child protection is an area central to the CoLP priorities that:

- Keep those who live, work, and visit the City safe and feeling safe
- Put the victim at the heart of everything we do

Strategic governance for this area is delivered by the Commander of Security and Operations with local oversight coordinated at the Strategic Vulnerability Board (SVB) with local authority representation and specialist support. The SVB reports in to the CoLP Performance Group and in turn to the Strategic Planning and Performance Committee and Police Authority Board.

The CoLP is also a partner of the City of London and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP), established in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and the statutory guidance issued within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

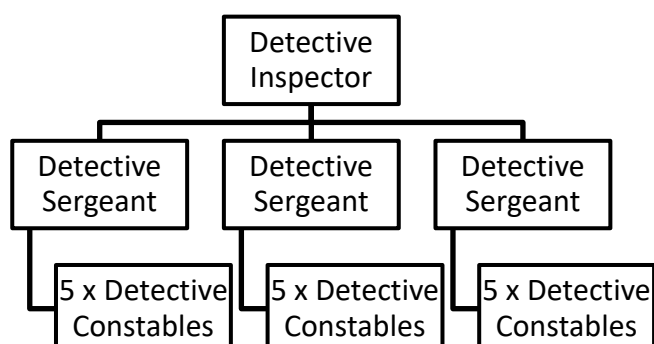
[chscp | City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

The CHSCP's safeguarding arrangements define how safeguarding partners, relevant agencies and other organisations work together to coordinate their safeguarding services. They include details about how safeguarding partners identify and respond to the needs of children, commission and publish local child safeguarding practice reviews and provide for independent leadership and scrutiny.

In addition, CoLP also engage regionally and nationally with National Police Chief Council's (NPCC) public protection working groups (strategic and tactical) to share best practice and maximise opportunities for service improvements.

Service Delivery Provider - Police

2. The Public Protection Unit (PPU) within the Investigation Services Command of the Specialist Operations Directorate is the team that manages all referrals of child protection matters. The establishment of the team is:

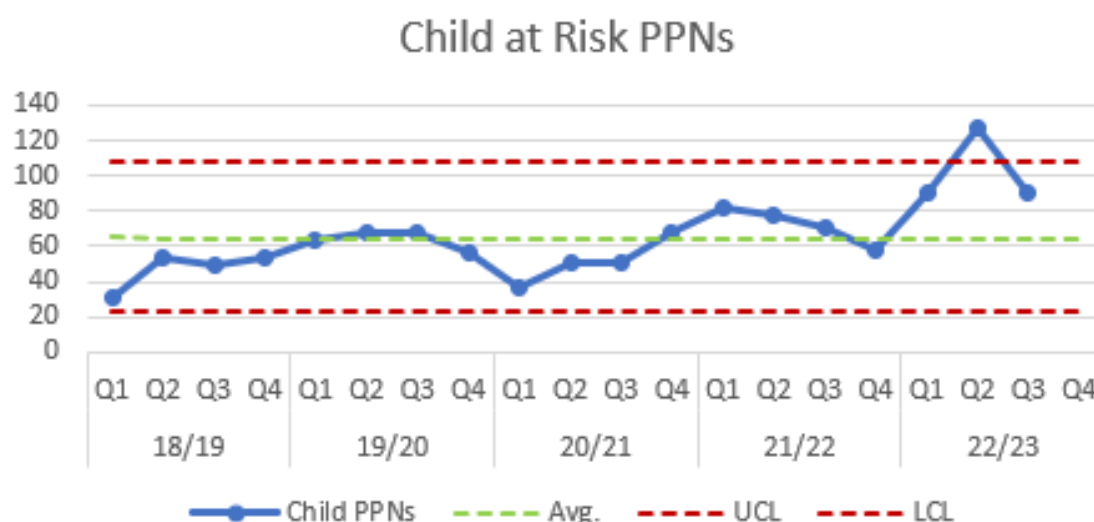


Demand

3. Every police employee who believes that a child is in need of support services or is suffering, likely to suffer or has suffered significant harm must bring the matter to the attention of the PPU who will assess what action needs to take place.

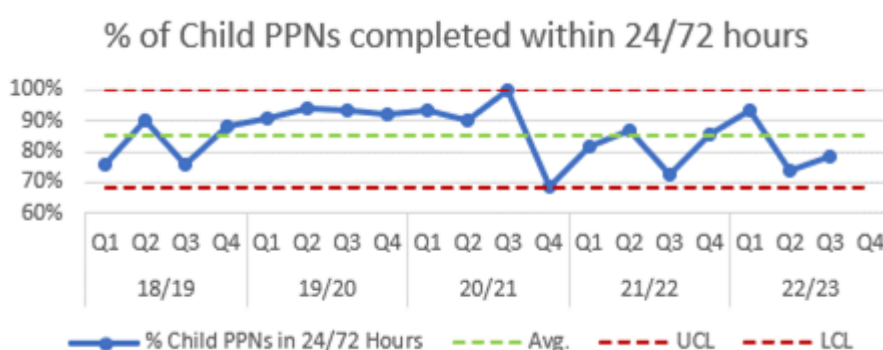
In situations where there is no immediate risk to the child the referral should be made using a Public Protection Notice (PPN) which will be sent to the COLP PPU for assessment and dissemination.

The following chart summarises the volume of PPNs submitted to the PPU.



The volume of Child PPNs has increased for 22/23, with all three months above the average. This is largely reflective of local training delivered (Voice of the Child and Vulnerability training to ALL frontline officers) to help improve the identification of children at risk.

4. The management of PPNs is conducted by one of the PPU Detective Sergeants (supported by others in the Unit when demand spikes) alongside their operational role, supervising a breadth of vulnerability linked crime. This assures an assessment of the risk and an appropriate response is defined and acted upon.



As mentioned, matters with immediate risk are managed by the responding officers with access to specialist support around the clock as required. The preceding chart articulates that the completion rate has dropped. All PPNs are assessed within the relevant time but with the volume of PPNs rising there has been a trend of reduced data quality. This has led to the PPU having to return PPNs for more information before they are able to complete. The assessment is that newly trained frontline officers are submitting more PPNs demonstrating that they are alive to the issues of child protection but the attention to detail requires improvement. An improvement plan is underway to address this that also considers potential system process issues that may require change and are being considered with our Niche/Pronto RMS Admin Team.

5. The following tables summarise the volume of crime/incident trends over time for Child Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation.

Child abuse is when anyone under the age of eighteen is either harmed or not properly looked after, categorised as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

Child sexual exploitation involves either inducements, violence (or threats of), coercion and intimidation towards children under eighteen to engage in sexual activities or have them performed on them.

6. The number of **CSA crimes** (section '7' below) for 2022/23 is 15 of the total 29. Of these, 5 are linked to one live operation of non-recent child abuse. The allegations involve rape and sexual assault.

The other 10 crimes include the following offence types:

- Sexual exposure to children at a school
- Possession/Distribution of indecent images
- Blackmail linked to sharing of nude images of a child
- Administer poison to a child (spiking)

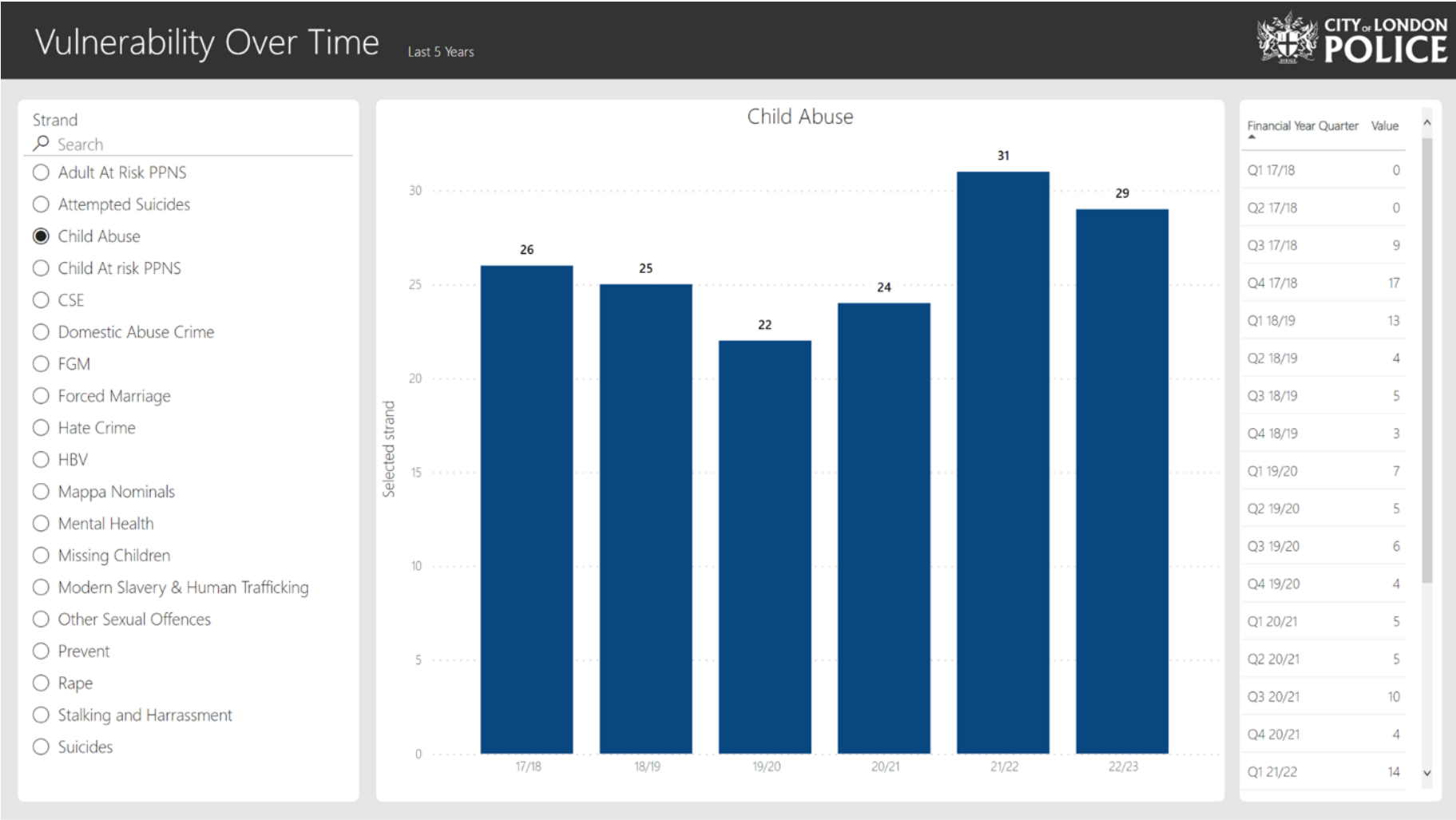
12 of the 15 investigations are live.

The non-crime incidents recorded fall into the category of concern for safety with occurrence types of:

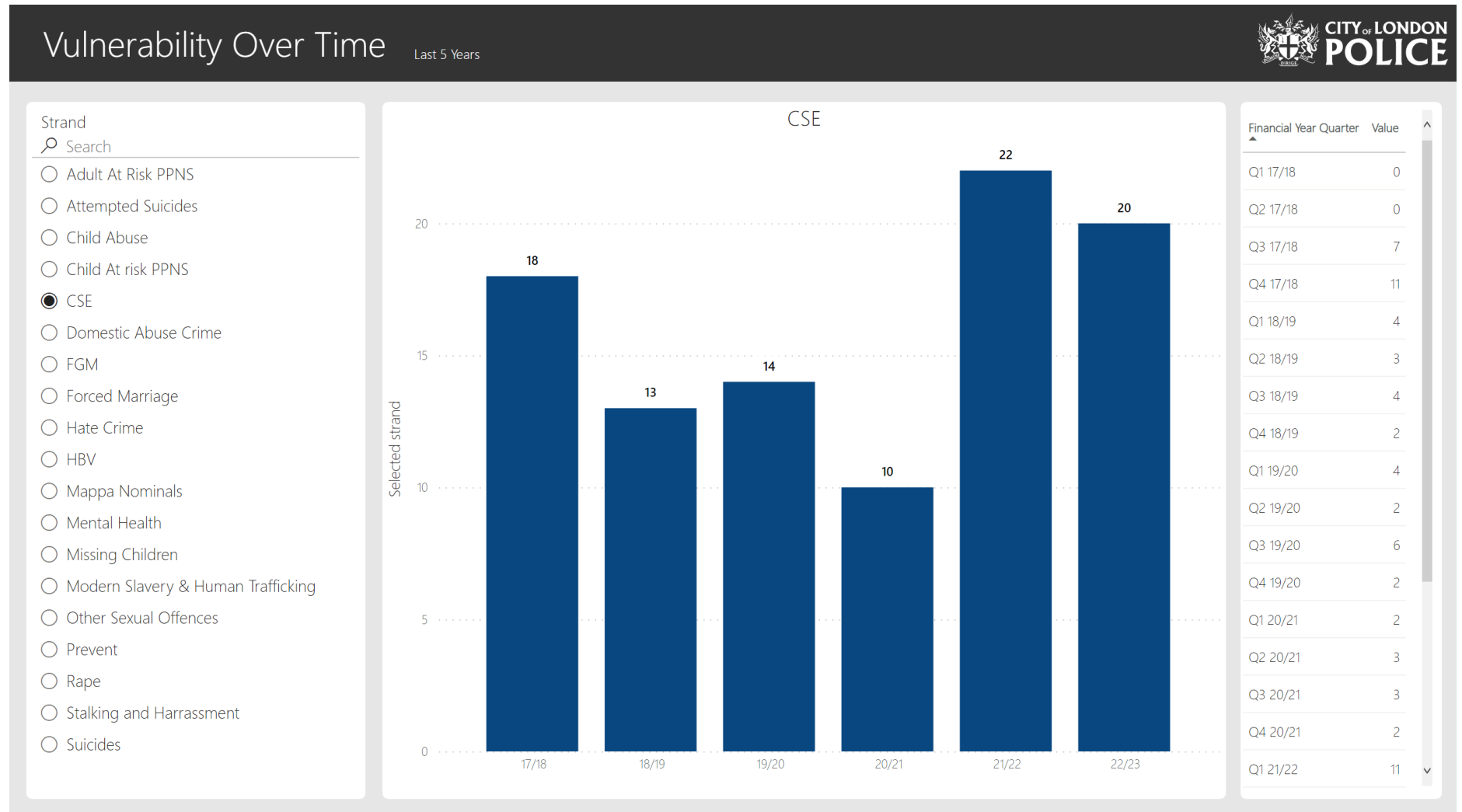
- Drunk and disorderly
- Mental health
- Anti-social behaviour
- Unable to get home late at night

All incidents have been resolved.

7. Child Abuse (Crimes and Incidents)



8. Child Sexual Exploitation (Crimes & Incidents)



9. The number of **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) crimes** for 2022/23 is 8 of the total 20. Of these, 3 are linked to the live operation of non-recent child abuse mentioned in section '6' above.

The other 5 crimes include the following offence types:

- Rape
- Blackmail
- Administer poison to a child (spiking)
- Indecent video imagery of child under 13

All crimes are live investigations.

The non-crime incidents recorded all fall into the category of concern for safety that have been resolved or have been linked to above crimes.

Referral

10. In situations where a child may be in need of emergency protection or urgent action is required by one of the agencies, City and Hackney Children Services provide an out of hours response. Non-emergency child referrals are made to the City of London Corporation Children's Social Care Team Manager.

The majority of referrals received involve children who reside outside of the City and in these instances the PPN is referred to the relevant Police Control Room. For urgent response, the local Safeguarding Teams relevant to that area will be contacted to carry out their own assessment and inform their local social care team as they deem this appropriate.

11. Referrals can also be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in response to allegations against professionals who work with children in the City of London. The criteria for making referrals to the LADO will be when any person who works with children, in connection with their employment or voluntary activity has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children.

In respect of jurisdiction, allegations will be dealt with by the City of London Corporation LADO where the alleged incident took place within the City of London, or where the allegation is made against an adult in their personal life and they work with children in the City of London.

If the incident has occurred in the City, but the adult in question works with children or has children out of the City area then the City of London LADO will make the referrals to the corresponding LADO covering the relevant area.

12. Cases in the following categories are brought to the immediate attention of the Detective Superintendent, Specialist Operations:

- The death of a child
- Incidents of multiple or organised abuse
- Incidents involving significant professionals (inc. CoLP employees, Social workers, Health or Education staff)
- Cases meeting the criteria for a serious case review
- Cases involving persons of public prominence or institutions (including non-recent cases)
- Cases that may attract significant media interest.

Investigation

13. The PPU has responsibility for the investigation of all child protection cases. PPU monitor all submissions of PPNs., including any children taken into Police Protection. Development of PPU Officers who investigate child protection matters is delivered by the Specialist Child Abuse Investigators Development Programme (SCAIDP) established by the College of Policing. The SCAIDP also requires officers to complete twenty hours continual professional development per year as part of their accreditation that is assessed by the College of Policing.

14. All child protection investigations are carried out in accordance with Authorised Professional Practice and London Safeguarding Children Procedures.

[London Safeguarding Children Procedures](#)

Effective collaboration and information sharing is essential to risk identification and management. A key component of achieving this are strategy meetings. Whenever it becomes apparent that a child has suffered, is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, the Team Manager from Children's Social Care will be responsible for convening a Strategy Meeting/Discussion. The meeting will include Children's Social Care, Police/PPU, the professional referrer and any other agency as appropriate (e.g. Health, Education). If there is any likelihood that the child may require a medical examination - especially where sexual abuse is suspected, the appropriate senior paediatrician must be included to advise the strategy group.

15. The PPU also investigate non-recent allegations of child abuse, although the Detective Superintendent, Specialist Operations will give consideration to the Major Crime Team investigating should one or more of the following factors exist:

- Multiple victims
- Multiple suspects (organised crime group, paedophile ring)
- Offence involved person of public prominence (PPP)
- Offence involves an institution.

Should an investigation be allocated to the Major Crime Team, SCAIDP trained officers from the PPU will assist in the investigation as appropriate.

16. Operation Hydrant is a coordination hub established in June 2014 to deliver the national policing response, oversight, and coordination of non-recent child sexual abuse investigations concerning persons of public prominence, or in relation to those offences which took place within institutional settings.

Operation Hydrant was set up when it became apparent that forces around the country were investigating a significant number of non-recent allegations of child sexual abuse involving persons of public prominence or within institutions. There was a risk that investigators were looking at the same individuals and institutions and it was also clear that officers dealing with these complex cases required support and guidance.

Operation Hydrant is informed by individual forces of investigations meeting the criteria, and then coordinates the information among forces to prevent duplication. It does not carry out individual investigations – this is done by individual Forces.

The CoLP engages as appropriate with the Hydrant Team in line with all nationally agreed process and procedures.

17. The PPU investigate offences involving the indecent images of children and paedophile material held on a computer. This work is conducted with the support of the CoLP Forensic Services and in particular, the High Tech Crime Unit. Regional and National support is also provided by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and National Crime Agency (NCA) respectively. Local developments are well advanced to improve our local digital response, supported by the CoLP Digital Exploitation Service (DES). Developments include staff training in digital capabilities and the deployment of a Digital Media Investigator (DMI) in the PPU. The DMI is a tactical adviser operating in support of live incidents, investigations, gathering intelligence and conducting proactive/reactive investigations where digital technology and data acquisition opportunities exist.

18. Technology improvements also continue with the imminent deployment of the Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) that:

- Helps identify and safeguard victims
- Makes investigating Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse faster and more effective
- Supports international efforts to remove images from the Internet

CAID uses the latest technology to transform how we deal with images of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. It brings together all the images that the Police and NCA encounter. Forces then use the images' unique identifiers – called hashes - and metadata to improve how they investigate these crimes and protect children.

External Monitoring

19. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspect how well CoLP keeps children safe. Their last inspection was in 2019 with an inspection review in December 2021. Their full findings are published and accessible via the following links:

2019 Inspection Report

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/city-of-london-national-child-protection-inspection>

2021 Inspection Review

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/city-of-london-national-child-protection-inspection-post-inspection-review/>

20. Summary of findings reported in 2020:

- The force was highly committed to protecting vulnerable people, including children.
- Senior officers held regular governance and oversight meetings.
- The PPU had a good working relationship with the other agencies that formed the City of London safeguarding partnership and understood the challenges of working with agencies across the Greater London area.
- The force's response to reports of missing children was excellent and frontline staff in all roles responded to these incidents as priorities.
- Recognising when children were at risk was also reflected in the way staff dealt with children when they were in custody. We saw some highly effective practice and support being provided to these children by the custody staff, and prompt referrals being made to organise support for vulnerable children.
- Throughout the inspection, we encountered highly motivated staff and managers working to help vulnerable children.
- We found that staff often lacked experience or weren't fully trained to recognise the importance of 'capturing the voice of the child' or seeing wider risks for children beyond the incident at hand.
- Even in the specialist PPU, vulnerability and risk weren't recognised consistently.
- The force was doing little to identify, pursue or disrupt online offenders involved in the downloading or distributing of indecent images of children in its area.
- Its management of registered sex offenders wasn't robust enough.
- Specific areas for improvement included: •
 - speaking to children, recording their behaviour and demeanour, and making sure their concerns and views are heard and inform decisions for their welfare;
 - considering the wider risks posed to children when they are found in high-risk situations and they may be criminally exploited;
 - ensuring that flags and markers are used effectively on force systems to alert the workforce to risk and vulnerability;

- providing meaningful and timely supervision of investigations, so that opportunities are pursued, and cases aren't unnecessarily delayed;
- reducing delays in holding strategy discussions or multi-agency management meetings, particularly those to safeguard children living outside the City area;
- making sure there is timely support from appropriate adults for children in police detention;
- effectively supervising offenders in the community;
- providing a robust and consistent approach to dealing with intelligence about online offending and those who distribute indecent images of children.
- We made six recommendations intended to help the force improve its response to safeguarding children.

21. The following is a summary from the 2021 post-inspection review. In December 2021 and notated alongside are improvements we have made to address the issues/areas for improvement raised:

- The force is training its workforce to recognise vulnerability and to speak to children. Although this was delayed by COVID-19, training programmes are now underway and are well attended.

Voice of the Child training now complete for all frontline staff. The impact of this has been seen in the volume of engagement with PPU and referrals made using PPNs

- The force has improved the way it manages registered sex offenders (RSO). Officers carry out assessments and record them on the appropriate systems. The assessments are well supervised. But officers still need to improve their risk management plans for sexual and violent offenders.

Training for assessing officers provided and now RSOs are being managed by a dedicated Lifetime Offender Management Unit.

- Healthcare professionals see every child held in police detention.
- Custody staff refer detained children to children's social care (CSC) services. But we saw delays in appropriate adults arriving to support detained children.

This was due to service provider not meeting SLA with the CoLP. Backup provider now in place to ensure timely response whilst SLA failures of primary provider are addressed.

- PPU staff investigate child protection cases effectively. The investigations take place within a reasonable time, are well planned, and include evidence from body-worn cameras.
- PPU supervisors make timely referrals and hold strategy discussions to keep up the progress of investigations.
- We found the staff and supervisors in the PPU to be highly motivated and dedicated to their work. But staffing levels are low, particularly in specialist supervisory roles.

Establishment of PPU was increased to the level articulated earlier in the report to meet the demand and diversity of responsibility. It is also in the process of moving to a 7-day week operation cognisant of a demand profile that links to a threat demographic spanning the core night time economy period of Thursday to Sunday.

- Although City of London Police has low volumes of reported child abuse and vulnerability crime, the PPU has very wide terms of reference. It is responsible for almost all types of crime against children and vulnerable adults, including serious sexual offences and management of sexual offenders, as well as exploitation, modern slavery and missing persons. Many of these crimes are complex and technical and take longer to investigate, with high demand for victim support. The PPU also helps colleagues who want advice on safeguarding and handles all referrals to other safeguarding agencies. A review of the PPU's terms of reference might help force leaders to achieve a better balance between the unit's capability and the risks and demands it faces.

Review of remit informed the establishment growth for the PPU as mentioned above to address this diversity of demand.

- The force hasn't changed its control room systems enough to make sure warning markers alert officers quickly when children are at risk. This is partly because some of these systems are due to be updated and replaced. One system – computer aided despatch (CAD)

The CAD replacement project is still underway (MPS led) that will provide long term solutions to this. Special schemes are exploited within the capability of current systems to place system alerts.

- The approach to online child abuse hasn't improved. The force needs to improve its systems and processes for tackling online child abuse.

CAID delivery, digital capability improvements and DMI deployment are nearing (as referenced earlier in this report) completion and will improve service in this space.

HMICFRS concluded: We are encouraged to see City of London Police has acted to address most of the recommendations from our 2019 inspection. The force has improved the way officers investigate child abuse, how they manage sex offenders and how they treat children in detention. Supervision is effective and access to multi-agency support for children is well co-ordinated and prompt. The force is working to improve the quality of its performance management information. This will help leaders to understand how effective the service is in responding to vulnerable people and children

22. Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) were established under the Children Act (2004) to review cases where a child has died and abuse or neglect is known or suspected. SCRs could additionally be carried out where a child has not died, but has come to serious harm as a result of abuse or neglect. They aim to establish learning for agencies and professionals to improve the way that they work together to safeguard children. A local safeguarding children board (LSCB) can commission a review for any case where it suspects anything can be learned to improve local practice.

23. A serious child safeguarding case is one in which:

- abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected
- the child has died or been seriously harmed

Whilst no City child protections matters have necessitated a SCR, the partnerships we maintain facilitate our access to them and the learning they provide to enable continuous improvement.

24. Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Education, 2018) changed the structure of these reviews, now known as Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (SPRs). Responsibility for learning lessons lies with a new national panel – the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the Panel) – and with local safeguarding partners.

The Panel and local partners help to identify serious child safeguarding cases that may raise issues of national importance. They commission a review that involves all practitioners who may be relevant or have information that will help to provide learning for future practice.

For Designated Safeguarding Leads and others with responsibility for safeguarding in schools, learning from reviews is important to improve the way that children and young people are protected.

Under Working Together to Safeguard Children's new arrangements, the education sector is seen as a 'relevant agency' but not a statutory partner. It is therefore important for schools to inform the process of learning and think strategically about any possible cases that may help to inform and drive practice in education – advocating for this view with safeguarding partners to inform the commissioning of SPRs.

25. **Future Developments;** Vulnerability, including child protection matters spans the following thematic areas:

- Mental Health
- Adults at Risk
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Honour Based Abuse
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
- Managing Offenders
- Prostitution
- Sexual Offences
- Missing Persons
- Gangs
- Knife Crime
- County Lines

Demand in many of these areas is increasing and as such is requiring improvements to be made to the way we monitor, measure and manage these areas, coordinating the police response. Specialist Operations and Local Policing are working together to design a CoLP Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The aim for the MASH is to improve how we bring together all the agencies involved in safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children linked to the above thematic areas. Bespoke to City requirements this will build on existing partnerships (local

authority, health and well-being partners) ensuring that when any related abuses are reported to any of the agencies involved, all the agencies can become aware of them as quickly as possible and use the full range of powers and options available to all of them to put the best possible solutions in place to help the victims.

Conclusion

26. Volume of demand linked to child protection in the City of London is low, but the associated harm can be high. Considerate to the potential risks associated with the harm is why this is an area of high focus and continuous improvement. The importance of cross-sector ownership cannot be understated and building on the strong relationship we already have with our CoLC colleagues and Pan-London/National partners, further improvements will be delivered to strengthen the service we deliver to victims. This will further the legitimacy of our service and increase public confidence to engage as we have already seen e.g. in the way victims of non-recent abuse are coming forward.

Contact

Det. Supt. Richard Waight,
Head of Investigation Services
Specialist Operations
City of London Police
Richard.waight@cityoflondon.police.uk