



**To:** Business Co-ordination Board

**From:** Chief Constable

**Date:** 25 March 2014

## **CHILDREN IN NEED UPDATE**

### **1. Purpose**

1.1 This paper is intended to provide an update on the Force response to child protection issues.

### **2. Background**

2.1 All officers and staff within the Constabulary are able to refer Child Protection (CP) concerns by submitting a referral form which is triaged within the Multi – Agency Referral unit (MARU). The MARU also receives referrals from external agencies and uses information from a range of agencies in order to effectively identify and manage risk. Once an appropriate response has been agreed then a referral is either passed to the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU) for investigation (or a partner agency if a police investigation is not required).

2.2 The Constabulary has had a specialist response to child protection issues for many years and the CAIU is within the Public Protection Department command. The unit is responsible for joint working with colleagues from Children Social Care (CSC) in accordance with 'Working Together' guidance. There is a statutory obligation on the Constabulary and CSC to jointly investigate CP issues where a threshold of significant harm is met or likely to be met.

2.3 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough apply a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which is the primary, generic early help assessment tool used by practitioners working with children, young people and families. By providing a common approach it helps practitioners in different organisations coordinate and plan their work and interventions to meet a child and families' identified needs.

2.4 The CAF is used to support children of all ages and to help identify and address any type of need which would prevent a child/young person reaching their potential. It has been designed for use by anyone who works with children, young people and families, whether they are employed or volunteers, and working in the public, private or third sector.

### 3. Strategy

3.1 The CAIU have 32 specialist officers within the Public Protection Department (PPD) tasked to conduct child protection investigations and safeguard children in partnership with other agencies. These officers are employed in two units based at Peterborough and Cambridge. The current establishment is second only to the Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Units and is indicative of the commitment the Constabulary has made to provide a specialist response to CP.

3.2 It is the responsibility of each and every individual and department within the Force to take immediate action to safeguard children where necessary. First responders, Force Control Room staff, Police Service Centre staff and duty managers are experienced in escalating and carrying out immediate safeguarding actions. Police officers are able to use statutory powers to remove a child to a place of safety and this is an established element of police first response. The PPD also has officers trained in safeguarding on duty 24/7 who are able to assist colleagues and if necessary, respond to child protection issues.

3.3 Front line officers have received training in responding to incidents of child protection and this includes an instruction to take positive action by ensuring a child is safe and taking all available steps to safeguard the child and their siblings. An on duty senior detective is available 24/7 who is able to command complex child protection investigations until such time as specialist resources are available to take over.

3.4 The Constabulary is committed to the MARU, recognising that effective information sharing and a multi-agency response is essential when responding to complex child protection issues.

3.5 A criminal justice response to child protection is only one outcome of an investigation and significant effort is made to support family court proceedings, child protection conference plans and child in need support plans, with the objective of ensuring that children are kept safe.

3.6 Police support for CAF is predominantly through sharing of information via the Police officers and staff based within the MARU.

3.7 CAF is used in the MARU and specialist teams where officers are seconded to multi-agency Family Support Teams. Specialist safeguarding officers across CP, adult abuse and domestic abuse have an awareness of CAF and their need to support it effectively share information across the key disciplines of children, adults and domestic abuse.

3.8 The effectiveness of the CAF process is greatly assisted by a countywide common referral document and the processes by which Police officers and staff submit Child and Adult Safeguarding referrals.

#### **4. Performance**

4.1 Recent HMIC data (to March 2013) indicates Cambridgeshire's Child Rape detection performance is in line with the national average, as is the 'no crime' rate. Demand on the CAIU remains high (when compared to last year) however, detection performance achieved by this unit, particularly for offences of Rape (48.1%) and Sexual Assault (29.0%) remains better than baseline.

#### **5. Current activity**

5.1 Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary are expected to conduct an inspection of the Constabulary's response to CP issues during the summer of 2014. The guidance from HMIC is that this will inspect a broad range of Public Protection functions that relate to children. A pre-inspection team will support the PPD by undertaking an internal assessment against the anticipated inspection criteria to ensure our systems, structures and processes are robust, prior to the formal inspection.

5.2 The Constabulary is actively seeking to enhance the MARU and increase its effectiveness as a multi-agency safeguarding hub. Three additional posts have been created for the MARU in order to increase its capacity to triage and respond to safeguarding referrals which includes weekends.

#### **6 Summary**

6.1 The provision of specialist CP investigation and safeguarding resources supported by the MARU ensure the constabulary has the necessary resources, structures and processes in place to effectively safeguard children at risk.

6.2 Police appropriately support the CAF commensurate with their role.

6.3 The Force is currently reviewing how the CAF process can be developed and supported and the head of PPD is meeting with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CAF leads in order to consider this issue.

#### **7 Recommendation**

7.1 It is recommended that the Board notes the report.