

<b>CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 12</b>
<b>17 JUNE 2015</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

**Report of the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner**

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**SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE - UPDATE ON ACTIONS FOLLOWING HER MAJESTY’S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY INSPECTION OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY**

**1. PURPOSE**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Police and Crime Panel (“the Panel”) with an update on actions following Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary’s (HMIC) Inspection of Cambridgeshire Constabulary (“the Constabulary”) response to domestic abuse.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1. To note the report.

**3. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

3.1 Item 6 – To review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, by the Commissioner in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner’s functions.

**4. BACKGROUND**

4.1 The Policing Protocol Order 2011 (“the Protocol”) sets out some key guiding principles for all Police and Crime Commissioners, Chief Constables and Police and Crime Panels.

4.2 Under the Protocol, the Police and Crime Commissioner (“the Commissioner”) has the legal power to scrutinise, support and challenge the overall performance of the Constabulary and hold the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the Constabulary’s officers and staff. The Protocol is clear that the Commissioner must not fetter the operational independence of the Constabulary and the Chief Constable.

4.3 In turn, the Protocol enables the Panel to scrutinise the Commissioner in the exercise of his statutory functions, but does not provide for the Panel to scrutinise the Chief Constable. However, in the spirit of the Protocol to enhance policing for local communities, the Commissioner has provided this report which predominately relates to the actions of the Constabulary.

4.4 The Commissioner has previously provided the Panel with a report to their July 2014 meeting on his response to HMIC’s domestic abuse inspection report. The Panel are asked to refer to that report.

**5. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER’S ROLE**

5.1 The Commissioner and the Chief Constable put victims at the centre of policing and are clear that support is based on need, not crime type, to enable victims to cope and recover from their experience. They both feel it is crucial that when a victim of domestic abuse turns to the Constabulary for help that they get both a professional investigation from specially trained

officers and appropriate support from experts to cope and survive the experience.

- 5.2 In 2014, the Ministry of Justice allocated funding to Police and Crime Commissioners to provide local bespoke services for victims. In October 2014, Cambridgeshire led the way nationally by opening a Constabulary-led Victims' Hub; six months ahead of the majority of other Police and Crime Commissioners. Consequently, the Commissioner and the Constabulary have been able to share their delivery model and experiences with other Police and Crime Commissioners and police forces.
- 5.3 The Commissioner has also provided funding to the Shrievalty Trust's Bobby Scheme and for a Young Persons Independent Domestic Violence Advocate towards supporting the victims and families of domestic abuse victims. The Trust provides additional home security for vulnerable and persistently targeted domestic abuse victims and their children. This will enable families to remain in their homes rather than seeking re-homing. Independent Domestic Violence Advocates provides structured comprehensive support to victims of domestic abuse.
- 5.4 The Constabulary has two Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Units, which are part of the Public Protection Department. The Units are responsible for the day-to-day management of the investigations of domestic abuse. Their primary objectives are to ensure the safeguarding of domestic abuse victims and that offenders are brought to justice in a time manner so that they cannot continue or escalate any violent and or abusive behaviour towards the victim. Officers within the unit are experienced investigators in the remit of domestic abuse investigation. The Units also work to ensure that solutions are found that offer support to those who are looking to escape from an abusive relationship.

## **6. HMIC INSPECTION AND REPORT**

- 6.1 HMIC undertook their domestic abuse inspection of the Constabulary in November 2014 and made 15 recommendations to improve delivery. These ranged from reviewing capacity, training, structures and processes through to partnership working and leadership. When the HMIC inspection team revisited in February 2014 they highlighted the substantial progress that the Constabulary had made, particularly the improvements to victims of violence. HMIC also sent out a 125 point action plan that was sent to all police forces to assist them in framing performance improvement in domestic abuse management.
- 6.2 HMIC's report "*Cambridgeshire Constabulary's approach to tackling domestic abuse*" was published on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014. A national thematic report<sup>1</sup> '*Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse*' was published at the same time as the Constabulary's report.

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<sup>1</sup> These inspections examine a key issue across a representative number of police forces, and comment solely on performance in relation to that key issue. This type of inspection identifies deficiencies relevant to the police service as a whole and spreads good practice regarding a specific aspect of policing

6.3 The Constabulary assessed the 125 point HMIC Action Plan, classifying the actions as ‘red’, ‘amber’ and ‘green’, and then converted the red and amber ones into a Cambridgeshire Action Plan. This Action Plan, divided up into 11 discrete areas, has driven forward the Constabulary’s work to improve performance. These areas are:

- Strategic ownership;
- Thorough information and intelligence checks;
- Take positive action against perpetrators;
- Improve specialism and knowledge in investigators;
- Work in greater partnership with Crown Prosecution Service, challenging decisions where appropriate;
- Incorporate the views of victims through surveys
- Get there promptly;
- Ensure greater focus on supporting victims;
- Gather evidence effectively;
- Significantly increase the number of “evidence based prosecutions” (where there is no statement of complaint);
- Identify learning from both a local and national level;

6.4 A number of the actions relate directly to the provision of victims services and support. All actions are assessed, including those classified as being green, thereby ensuring performance previously assessed as green has been maintained as well as progress in those areas classified as red and amber assessed as requiring action.

6.5 The Constabulary has submitted reports to the Commissioner’s Business Coordination Board (“the Board”) in January, June and October 2014 and June 2015 in respect of both their response to the HMIC inspection and updates on their Action Plan to take forward the HMIC recommendations. The June 2014 Board report enabled the Commissioner to hold the Chief Constable to account for the findings of the report and the actions that would be taken forward to address these recommendations. A copy of the minutes of the Board meeting and a link to the published Board report, were subsequently sent to the Home Secretary, with a copy to HMIC, thus fulfilling the Commissioner’s statutory duty under the Police Act 1996.

6.6 The Commissioner will continue to call for reports to his Board in order to fulfil his statutory duty to hold the Chief Constable to account for the Constabulary’s performance in respect of dealing with domestic abuse.

6.7 Partnership working is crucial to effectively tackle domestic abuse. We rely on the commitment of other agencies to work with us to protect vulnerable people from harm. The Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit is one of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub’s investigation arms where staff from a range of agencies work alongside police officers and staff. The governance of domestic abuse sits with the two Domestic Abuse Governance Boards (run by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) which the Constabulary sits on.

## **7. SERVICES TO VICTIMS INCLUDING THOSE WITH DOMESTIC ABUSE**

7.1 Safeguarding begins at the point the Constabulary receives a call and when an officer attends the call for service; with the scale of safeguarding designed to meet the level of risk identified. The Constabulary has undertaken significant work looking at the range of responses to domestic abuse. At the lowest level, this may simply be the actions of the response officer in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the victim, through to the activities of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in helping and protecting the victims deemed at medium or high risk. Improvements in domestic response times remain a focus in order to ensure a sustained improvement is achieved; with a move to using victim led appointments for the less urgent cases where appropriate.

7.2 A new simplified victim pathway has been agreed with partners and based on an Initial and then subsequent Detailed Victim Needs Assessment. When someone reports a crime in

Cambridgeshire an Initial Victim Needs Assessment is carried out to identify those victims who require additional support. Their details are passed onto the Victims' Hub staff. This ensures support is offered based on need rather than crime type. Victims of crime, who have not reported their experience to the police can also request support by calling the Hub direct.

- 7.3 The Hub attempts to contact every victim identified with needs by phone. Where contact cannot be made, a letter or email is sent to outline the services available. Those victims not identified as having needs are also contacted either by email or letter to inform them that if their situation changes the Hub staff are still available.
- 7.4 The locally-based Victim Care Co-ordinators work with the victims to identify what they might need to help them cope and recover from the impact the crime has had on them. The staff can also call on a number of specialist services, commissioned in the main by the Commissioner, to provide additional support. A team of 15 newly-trained volunteers is also available to provide face-to-face support to those people who require it.
- 7.5 From October 2014 (when the Hub opened) to early May 2015, the Hub had dealt with over 1,500 victims who had their initial needs assessed. 28% of these were victims of domestic abuse. The Hub contact all of these domestic abuse victims, and went onto support 38%; 49% had no needs identified and 13% declined the offer of support.
- 7.6 Training of Constabulary officers and staff has been undertaken to improve their knowledge and develop their specialisms. This has included sessions on safeguarding input, investigation standards and evidence gathering. Officers within the Domestic Abuse Teams have noted an overall improvement in the quality of initial response and evidence gathered.
- 7.7 The Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit are all specially trained in investigating Domestic Abuse, safeguarding and supporting victims. They have become specialist in their field and familiar with working in partnership.
- 7.8 The roll out of Tu-Serve technology across to police officers provides further opportunities to secure and preserve evidence in the form of video, images, notes, statement and commentary.
- 7.9 The work to ascertain the views of the victims through a survey remains on going nationally. Once the decision is made regarding the scope of the survey the Constabulary will ensure that there is an appropriate response in Cambridgeshire.
- 7.10 The Constabulary are taking positive action against perpetrators. The use of Domestic Violence Prevention Notices and Domestic Violence Prevention Orders has increased and many of these have now been ratified by the courts, including a number of cases where those that breach have been sent to prison. Work is on-going to ensure that victims' feel fully supported and confident to engage with this process.

## 8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 8.1 Domestic Abuse updates, Business Coordination Board, January, June, October 2014 and June 2015  
<http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/>  
'Cambridgeshire Constabulary's approach to tackling domestic abuse', HMIC, March 2014  
<http://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/cambridgeshire-approach-to-tackling-domestic-abuse.pdf>  
'Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse', HMIC, March 2014  
<http://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/improving-the-police-response-to-domestic-abuse.pdf>  
'Commissioner's response to HMIC report on Cambridgeshire Constabulary's approach to tackling domestic abuse', Police and Crime Panel report, July 2014  
<http://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=543&MId=3392&Ver=4>