



Cambridgeshire
Police & Crime
Commissioner

To: Business Coordination Board

From: Chief Constable

Date: 04 June 2015

DOMESTIC ABUSE GOVERNANCE – UPDATE ON ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Business Coordination Board (“the Board”) Cambridgeshire Constabulary (“the Constabulary”) progress against their Action Plan for tackling domestic abuse.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Board is recommended to note the report.

3. Background

3.1 In November 2013, as part of a national programme, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) undertook its initial inspection on the Constabulary’s response to domestic abuse. HMIC made 15 recommendations on how to improve delivery. These ranged from reviewing capacity, training, structures and processes through to partnership working and leadership.

3.2 When the HMIC inspection team revisited in February 2014 they highlighted the exceptional progress that the Constabulary had made, noting substantial improvements to victims of violence. It was encouraging that HMIC provided re-assurance that it was not the case that the Constabulary was missing some integral part of tackling domestic abuse. They noted that time was required to further embed working practices and to monitor performance.

3.3 Papers have been submitted to the Board in June and October 2014 which provided a comprehensive update on how the Constabulary was focusing its energies on improving service for victims and the development of the Constabulary’s Action Plan to take forward the HMIC recommendations.

- 3.4 As part of the forthcoming HMIC PEEL Inspection of Vulnerability, HMIC will again be reviewing Domestic Abuse performance and looking specifically for progress and performance improvement as set out in the action plan.
- 3.5 This report provides further detail on the Constabulary's progress against the Action Plan and looks at the Constabulary's readiness for the forthcoming inspection.

4. Action Plan

- 4.1 The original 125-point action plan that was sent to all police forces by HMIC to assist them in framing performance improvement in domestic abuse management was formally assessed, classified red, amber and green and returned to HMIC for assessment. All areas that were assessed as red and amber were then converted in the Cambridgeshire local action plan and it is this that has driven forward the work to improve performance.
- 4.2 As part of the preparation for the forthcoming inspection, all 125 points on the original action plan will be reviewed, as well as those in the Cambridgeshire local action plan, thereby ensuring performance previously assessed as green has been maintained as well as progress in those areas assessed as requiring action.
- 4.3 The Cambridgeshire Action Plan set out a plan for performance improvement under 11 headings.
- Strategic Ownership
 - Get there promptly
 - Thorough information and intelligence checks
 - Ensure greater focus in on supporting victims
 - Take positive action against perpetrators
 - Gather evidence effectively
 - Improve specialism and knowledge in investigators
 - Significantly increase the number of "evidence based prosecutions" (where there is no statement of complaint)
 - Work in greater partnership with the CPS, challenging decisions where appropriate
 - Identify learning from both a local and national level
 - Incorporate the views of victims through surveys

5. Progress

- 5.1 **Strategic Ownership** – Overall ownership of Domestic Abuse sits at Chief Officer level with the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC). The Detective Superintendent Head of Public Protection then delivers to the ACC and also sits on the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Domestic Abuse Governance Boards to ensure internal and external

governance. A Domestic Abuse improvement group has been set up, focusing on specific points within the Action Plan and this has included partnership support. Overall Domestic Abuse performance is then tracked through the Local Policing Priority Review Meeting (monitoring progress against the Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan) and then ultimately through the Force Operational Performance meeting chaired by the ACC.

- 5.2 **Get there promptly** – Significant work has been invested into looking at the range of responses to domestic abuse. Looking at those incidents that require immediate attendance through to the appointments for less urgent cases. Within this work, there have been briefings to Force Control Room (FCR) and Police Service Centre (PSC) staff to ensure they were supported in their role of making the initial assessment of risk and suitable deployment response. The volume of reported domestic abuse has increased year on year. Safeguarding begins at the point an officer attends the call for service; with the scale of safeguarding designed to meet the level of risk identified. 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 MASH 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 in order to ease the demand burden on front line officers.
- 5.3 **Thorough Intelligence Checks** – The FCR and PSC now routinely check intelligence systems and record the results on the Command and Control incident, such that it is available to the dispatcher and attending officer. The roll out of Tu-Serve will assist further in allowing officers to research relevant background to the incident, including once in attendance.
- 5.4 **Ensure a greater Victim Focus** – A new simplified victim pathway has been agreed with partners and based on an Initial and then subsequent Detailed Victim Needs Assessment. This works in harmony with the Victims' Hub. All officers have had a three hour safeguarding input and all supervisors a half day, including a powerful film based on lessons learned by another police force.
- 5.5 **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. There remain some challenges in securing sufficient evidence to secure a positive outcome, particularly in cases where the victim refuses to engage, even with subsequent support. Work to address this remains on going. Work is on-going to ensure that victims' feel fully supported and confident to engage with the process.
- 5.6 **Gather Evidence Effectively** – All supervisors have had a half days training in relation to the minimum investigation standards, which was fully supported by the Chief Constable. Officers within the Domestic Abuse Teams have noted an overall improvement in the quality of initial response and evidence gathered. The roll out of Tu-Serve provides further opportunities to secure and preserve evidence in the form of video, images, notes, statement and commentary.

- 5.7 **Improve Specialism and Knowledge in Investigators** – The Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit (DAISU) 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.
- 5.8 **Significantly increase the number of “evidence based prosecutions”**. This area has remained challenging as mentioned above. Cases that prove particularly challenging remain those where the victim declines to cooperate. Officers have become far more familiar with securing evidence in other ways, eg house-to-house enquiries, CCTV such that the cooperation of the victim is not always essential. The Domestic Abuse Improvement Group recognises and supports training requirements, and as such this is being facilitated through attachments to the Domestic Abuse Investigation Unit. Whilst prosecution possible outcome rates have deteriorated, and remained below the level seen in the last 12 months; an improvement in initial investigative quality and case preparation is acknowledged and it is anticipated this will manifest in an improvement in outcome rates in the coming months.
- 5.9 **Work in greater partnership with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), challenging decisions where appropriate** – again with DAISU becoming specialist in their field, they will regularly challenge the CPS where they don’t feel a decision is correct.
- 5.10 **Identify learning from both a local and national level** – Senior staff have attended conferences and learning events as well as national meetings to ensure that all best practice is considered. Links are made to partners such that we horizon scan and also keep up with current academic research and its findings around domestic abuse.
- 5.11 **Incorporate the views of the Victim through the surveys**. This work remains on going nationally as there are still no final decisions that have been made given its complex and challenging nature and the potential risks. Once decisions are made, we will ensure that there is an appropriate response in Cambridgeshire.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Significant work has been undertaken and there is good progress on all areas of the action plan. As outlined above, a full review of the original 125 point action plan will be undertaken ahead of the HMIC Domestic Abuse re-inspection due in late July.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Board note the contents of this paper.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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| Source Document | |
| Contact Officers | Det Supt Chris Mead Head of Public Protection Department, Cambridgeshire Constabulary |



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