



Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
PO Box 688
PE29 9LA
Tel: 0300 333 3456
Email: Cambs-pcc@cambs.pnn.police.uk
Twitter: /@PCCCambs

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

26th March 2019

Dear

HMICFRS – National Thematic Report “The Police Response to Domestic Abuse: An Update Report”

Under Section 55(5) of the 1996 Police Act, as Police and Crime Commissioner I am pleased to provide my formal response to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection of Cambridgeshire Constabulary entitled “The Policing Response to Domestic Abuse”, published on 26th February 2019. I have also taken the opportunity to seek the Chief Constable’s views on the report.

Firstly, I do wish to assure you that the Chief Constable and I are committed to working with our partners, to ensure the best possible service to those people in our county who suffer from domestic abuse.

The Chief Constable and I welcome the report by HMICFRS. In Cambridgeshire we have a strong partnership working ethos illustrated for example, through an effective Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and in-house Victim and Witness Hub.

My office oversees Cambridgeshire County compliance with the Cross Criminal Justice System Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework through the Criminal Justice Board, which I chair. Within this the key strands of critical success are well understood locally, and Cambridgeshire is currently in a positive position with a Special Domestic Violence Court operating from Huntingdon Magistrates Court. Further examples of positive practice include a Domestic Abuse Champions scheme, which has been embraced by local agencies (statutory and non-statutory), and an experienced Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor service, albeit limited to high risk Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences cases.

The Constabulary's response to HMICFRS recommendations are attached in Appendix 1

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jason Ablewhite', with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

Jason Ablewhite
Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner
cc PCC@hmic.gsi.gov.uk

Cambridgeshire Constabulary's response HMICFRS Area for Improvements:

1. Force response to HMICFRS progress update against Recommendation 3 from "A Progress Report on the Police Response to Domestic Abuse"

1.1. Recommendation 3: By April 2018, every police force in England and Wales should update its domestic abuse action plan, determine what more it can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in this report and specified below, and publish its revised action plan accordingly. This was an ongoing action within the National Stakeholders Group where all forces are represented. DCC Rolfe and COP wrote to forces regarding their DA plans.

Force Response: HMICFRS reviewed the Constabulary's progress against this recommendation in June 2018. The Constabulary was assessed as having successfully achieved the recommendation and was closed by HMICFRS as 'complete'.

1.2. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Recording: There is considerable variation between forces in the proportion of recorded crime identified as relating to domestic abuse. Forces need to ensure that domestic abuse crime including coercive control is being correctly identified and recorded. The next phase of ONS data is being prepared. As part of the National Stakeholders Panel a snap survey was distributed to try and understand how forces use the data set to aid their own performance.

Force Response: The Constabulary will continue to monitor its compliance with recording standards for crimes relating to domestic abuse, including coercive control. Data quality continues to be scrutinised and corrective action taken where issues are identified. Recurring themes highlighted through regular audit are reported and fed back to improve performance.

1.3. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Assessing and responding to risk: Forces should ensure arrangements for assessing and managing risk are well understood by officers and staff, especially at initial point of contact, and decision making around the grading of, and attendance at, domestic abuse incidents is supervised effectively. The next phase of the new domestic abuse risk assessment tool is about to start. DCC Rolfe and the COP have written to all Chief Constables explaining the new process. DCC Rolfe and the National Stakeholders Group have been part of this process since 2014.

Force Response: The Constabulary will continue to monitor its arrangements for assessing and managing risk. The threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement (THRIVE) model is used to support decision making in the control room. The call-handling system also includes specific question prompts for incidents of domestic abuse to identify and manage the risk to victims. The call-grading policy is being reviewed to improve performance and ensure that there are sufficient resources available to respond appropriately to prompt calls for service.

1.4. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Positive and preventative action: Nationally, arrest rates for domestic abuse are falling, with large variations across forces. There are considerable variations in the use of preventative measures. Forces need monitoring processes, supported by accurate data, to ensure that they are taking positive action such as arrest, and are making effective use of powers, for example domestic violent protection orders and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. Where orders or bail conditions are breached, forces need to ensure that there are appropriately robust processes in place to take action. Arrest rates and referrals to the CPS have been shared with the National Stakeholders on several occasions and DCC Rolfe also attended the NOG, HASC, and HMICFRS reference group to discuss them. Best practice surrounding the use of DVPOs and DVDSs has

been explored within the National Stakeholders and further development included a pilot DVDS online form to be trialled by the Metropolitan Police Service. The National Stakeholders Group has also been involved in the DA Consultation and work conducted by the Home Office.

Force Response: The Constabulary recognises the importance of taking positive action. The Domestic Abuse policy reinforces the requirement for all police officers and staff involved in responding to, and dealing with cases of domestic abuse to ensure that reasonable positive action is taken. The use of positive action and Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders is being reviewed, with investment in guidance, training and monitoring processes to improve performance and ensure that we are making best use of these powers to safeguard victims.

- 1.5. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Forces need to ensure that there are clear standards and expectations, with effective supervision, for building the best possible case for the victims of domestic abuse whether victims support police action or not. As part of the National Stakeholders Group the CPS and NPCC developed and distributed a best practice guide for prosecuting coercive control/DA cases. The guide was for police and prosecutors.

Force Response: The Constabulary recognises the importance of effective supervision, to ensure timely and effective investigation, manage risk and minimise harm. The force-wide supervisory framework is being reviewed to improve performance and reinforce expected standards. There is an ongoing monthly audit process by the Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Group to identify good practice and learning needs specific to incidents of domestic abuse.

- 1.6. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: CPS referrals and prosecutions: Nationally, referrals and charge rates are falling. Forces need to monitor the data and work closely with the CPS to understand whether improvement is required, and, if so, to effect change.

Force Response: The Constabulary will continue to monitor CPS referrals and charge rates. Performance is reviewed at the local Special Domestic Abuse Court (SDAC) meeting by CPS, Courts, Police, IDVA and Witness Services and explores cases that fail at court. This is the tactical meeting that supports the Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework (DABPF). CPS engagement and evidence-led prosecutions are also assessed internally by the Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Group to review and improve performance.

- 1.7. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Chief Officers in each police force should continue to oversee and ensure full implementation of these action plans and offer regular feedback on progress to their Police and Crime Commissioners. This should be a personal responsibility of the Chief Constable in each case. The leadership tasks for the service now is to sustain the level of determination and commitment seen since the publication of *Everyone's Business* to ensure that the police response to victims of domestic abuse continues to improve. HMICFRS will continue to monitor progress against force action plans as part of their PEEL inspection regime.

Force Response: Domestic Abuse continues to be a key strategic priority for the Constabulary to ensure we are targeting our resources to safeguard the vulnerable. There are consistent and effective governance structures in place with strategic, tactical and partnership oversight, to ensure that our response to victims of domestic abuse continues to improve.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary's response HMICFRS Area for Improvements:

1. Force response to HMICFRS progress update against Recommendation 3 from "A Progress Report on the Police Response to Domestic Abuse"

1.1. Recommendation 3: By April 2018, every police force in England and Wales should update its domestic abuse action plan, determine what more it can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in this report and specified below, and publish its revised action plan accordingly. This was an ongoing action within the National Stakeholders Group where all forces are represented. DCC Rolfe and COP wrote to forces regarding their DA plans.

Force Response: HMICFRS reviewed the Constabulary's progress against this recommendation in June 2018. The Constabulary was assessed as having successfully achieved the recommendation and was closed by HMICFRS as 'complete'.

1.2. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Recording: There is considerable variation between forces in the proportion of recorded crime identified as relating to domestic abuse. Forces need to ensure that domestic abuse crime including coercive control is being correctly identified and recorded. The next phase of ONS data is being prepared. As part of the National Stakeholders Panel a snap survey was distributed to try and understand how forces use the data set to aid their own performance.

Force Response: The Constabulary will continue to monitor its compliance with recording standards for crimes relating to domestic abuse, including coercive control. Data quality continues to be scrutinised and corrective action taken where issues are identified. Recurring themes highlighted through regular audit are reported and fed back to improve performance.

1.3. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Assessing and responding to risk: Forces should ensure arrangements for assessing and managing risk are well understood by officers and staff, especially at initial point of contact, and decision making around the grading of, and attendance at, domestic abuse incidents is supervised effectively. The next phase of the new domestic abuse risk assessment tool is about to start. DCC Rolfe and the COP have written to all Chief Constables explaining the new process. DCC Rolfe and the National Stakeholders Group have been part of this process since 2014.

Force Response: The Constabulary will continue to monitor its arrangements for assessing and managing risk. The threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement (THRIVE) model is used to support decision making in the control room. The call-handling system also includes specific question prompts for incidents of domestic abuse to identify and manage the risk to victims. The call-grading policy is being reviewed to improve performance and ensure that there are sufficient resources available to respond appropriately to prompt calls for service.

1.4. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Positive and preventative action: Nationally, arrest rates for domestic abuse are falling, with large variations across forces. There are considerable variations in the use of preventative measures. Forces need monitoring processes, supported by accurate data, to ensure that they are taking positive action such as arrest, and are making effective use of powers, for example domestic violent protection orders and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. Where orders or bail conditions are breached, forces need to ensure that there are appropriately robust processes in place to take action. Arrest rates and referrals to the CPS have been shared with the National Stakeholders on several occasions and DCC Rolfe also attended the NOG, HASC, and HMICFRS reference group to discuss them. Best practice surrounding the use of DVPOs and DVDSs has

been explored within the National Stakeholders and further development included a pilot DVDS online form to be trialled by the Metropolitan Police Service. The National Stakeholders Group has also been involved in the DA Consultation and work conducted by the Home Office.

Force Response: The Constabulary recognises the importance of taking positive action. The Domestic Abuse policy reinforces the requirement for all police officers and staff involved in responding to, and dealing with cases of domestic abuse to ensure that reasonable positive action is taken. The use of positive action and Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders is being reviewed, with investment in guidance, training and monitoring processes to improve performance and ensure that we are making best use of these powers to safeguard victims.

- 1.5. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Forces need to ensure that there are clear standards and expectations, with effective supervision, for building the best possible case for the victims of domestic abuse whether victims support police action or not. As part of the National Stakeholders Group the CPS and NPCC developed and distributed a best practice guide for prosecuting coercive control/DA cases. The guide was for police and prosecutors.

Force Response: The Constabulary recognises the importance of effective supervision, to ensure timely and effective investigation, manage risk and minimise harm. The force-wide supervisory framework is being reviewed to improve performance and reinforce expected standards. There is an ongoing monthly audit process by the Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Group to identify good practice and learning needs specific to incidents of domestic abuse.

- 1.6. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: CPS referrals and prosecutions: Nationally, referrals and charge rates are falling. Forces need to monitor the data and work closely with the CPS to understand whether improvement is required, and, if so, to effect change.

Force Response: The Constabulary will continue to monitor CPS referrals and charge rates. Performance is reviewed at the local Special Domestic Abuse Court (SDAC) meeting by CPS, Courts, Police, IDVA and Witness Services and explores cases that fail at court. This is the tactical meeting that supports the Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework (DABPF). CPS engagement and evidence-led prosecutions are also assessed internally by the Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Group to review and improve performance.

- 1.7. HMICFRS Update on Recommendation 3: Chief Officers in each police force should continue to oversee and ensure full implementation of these action plans and offer regular feedback on progress to their Police and Crime Commissioners. This should be a personal responsibility of the Chief Constable in each case. The leadership tasks for the service now is to sustain the level of determination and commitment seen since the publication of *Everyone's Business* to ensure that the police response to victims of domestic abuse continues to improve. HMICFRS will continue to monitor progress against force action plans as part of their PEEL inspection regime.

Force Response: Domestic Abuse continues to be a key strategic priority for the Constabulary to ensure we are targeting our resources to safeguard the vulnerable. There are consistent and effective governance structures in place with strategic, tactical and partnership oversight, to ensure that our response to victims of domestic abuse continues to improve.