

Home Secretary
c/o Gareth Redmond
Head of Police Transparency Unit
Home Office, Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

19th May 2014

Home Secretary,

North Yorkshire's Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCCs) response to HMIC's reports on "North Yorkshire Police's Approach to Tackling Domestic Abuse" and the National Thematic report "Everyone's Business" dated 26 March 2014

HMIC do a valuable job in identifying best practice, and ensuring police services are delivering the services our communities need. Victim focussed policing is absolutely fundamental to this, especially when dealing with domestic abuse cases which are some of the most impactful of crimes.

I was pleased to see HMIC welcome the good practice in North Yorkshire, but there remains an undoubted need to refocus efforts on victims over processes.

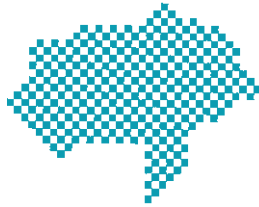
North Yorkshire Police (NYP) have invested heavily in this area recently, with the opening of a Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub and Central Referral Unit already improving the management and oversight of domestic abuse. These departments bring together all the responsible agencies under one roof, providing a co-ordinated and appropriate response to safeguarding victims.

I welcome HMIC's new checklist, which will be a valuable tool in holding the Chief Constable to account on behalf of victims. More generally we need to look to the College of Policing to help drive up national standards, allowing victims of domestic abuse to feel able to come forward quicker and with confidence that they will be dealt with fairly and appropriately.

In light of the HMIC report's findings, the Chief Constable has agreed to prepare an action plan to improve performance. I look forward to working with him to improve the services NYP offers victims.

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I also feel very strongly that much more needs to be done to encourage victims to come forward sooner. I am concerned that the current natural enforcement policy may be stopping victims engaging with the process earlier. I know that senior police officers share this concern, which was expressed to HMIC Zoe Billingham at a recent Professional Committee meeting I attended at the College of Policing. I would therefore like to ask if it might be possible to work with the College to trial alternative models.

For example, in cases of sexual abuse SARCs have proven to be very effective. I and many others feel that this model might be appropriate for victims of domestic abuse and I would be keen to pilot this in my area. However I do not always sense an appetite for innovation and challenge on the parts of HMIC or the Home Office.

I would therefore be very interested in your views on the scope for developing new services. These would of course go hand in hand with robust enforcement as appropriate.

Together with Commissioners taking over victim referral and victim services commissioning, this should lead to better and more accessible services. Including long term, sustainable funding for domestic abuse support, which will prove invaluable to victims, and also counselling to help victims cope and recover. These plans will lead to substantially improved services for victims, and I am confident the commissioning approach in North Yorkshire will be of huge benefit to our residents with significant advancements and additional services.

Prevention is key, and it is clear from HMIC that NYP needs to do more to ensure serial perpetrators of domestic abuse are appropriately dealt with. This will no doubt form part of the Chief Constable's action plan.

Having said that, the public can be confident in the service provided by North Yorkshire Police. It is testament to the dedicated staff at NYP that HMIC have noted that we have excellent teams we have, who have all been trained to a very high standard.

Yours sincerely

Julia Mulligan
North Yorkshire's Police & Crime Commissioner