

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey



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Response from Kevin Hurley, Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey to the HMIC report ***'Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse'***

Domestic abuse is a complex, tragic and prevalent crime and the OPCC is committed to seeing improvements. The HMIC report has recognised where progress is being made in Surrey and provides the opportunity to reflect on what more can be done.

I appointed Assistant Commissioner for Victims, Jane Anderson, to provide dedicated, independent scrutiny on just these kinds of issues and she has engaged extensively with adult and young domestic abuse survivors in Surrey. She made a number of recommendations for improving services, including having a better understanding of domestic abuse across the Force and meaningful training for officers, which is now being developed with assistance from the local outreach provider. These findings are echoed by the HMIC report. Surrey Police is very open and responsive to all suggestions for improvement and the OPCC will hold detailed discussions with the Force and partners to ensure local and national recommendations are implemented as appropriate to Surrey.

The Chief Constable has a personal commitment to improving the Force's service to victims of domestic abuse and I know she will consider carefully the HMIC report. However, I set no numerical targets for Surrey Police in order to liberate them to take a victim-centred approach. Statistics only tell a small part of the story and through



listening to victims we know that often they do not wish to use the criminal justice process to end the abuse. From our work with survivors, we understand that leaving an abusive partner needs to be carefully managed and making that decision is fraught with practical and emotional difficulty. It also has to be recognised that the criminal justice system will have a significant impact on the victim's experience and outcome achieved. In every case, the focus first and foremost must be on protecting all victims of abuse and families and providing a sensitive and emotionally intelligent service.

Later this year, my office will take responsibility for the local commissioning of victim services. Through listening to many victims affected by domestic abuse and other crime, we will provide support tailored to their specific needs to help them cope, recover and rebuild their lives. We have identified areas where we can do more, such as services for children and young people, and I am committed to doing so.

Early recognition of domestic abuse is critical to protecting victims and I'm pleased the confidence, empathy and knowledge of the Surrey Police contact centre staff is highlighted in the HMIC's report. The report also recognises the commitment of hard-working specialist and frontline officers to pursue perpetrators and protect victims and if there is more we can do to share information and co-ordinate efforts, I welcome these ideas. An issue highlighted in the report that we will closely look at is how our frontline officers and staff are keen to know who the serial perpetrators and high-risk victims are in their communities, so that they will be able to provide a better service to help keep victims safe.

I am pleased that the good relationships we have in Surrey with all of the agencies involved in this issue have been noted by HMIC. Only through a holistic approach will we increase disclosure of abuse and build a victim's trust to achieve the best outcome for them. The recently established Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a significant step forward and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is regarded as working well. We have a strong foundation to build on and we continue to actively participate in the multi-agency groups established for the development, commissioning and monitoring of domestic abuse services.

It has to be acknowledged that budgets are being cut year on year. We are maximising efficiency wherever possible to reinvest in the frontline and we are the only force in the



country to plan on increasing officer numbers. However, it is difficult to see where extra officers would come from to double-crew attendance at domestic abuse incidents. In my view, this is unrealistic with current resourcing levels, which are stretched across multiple priorities to keep the public safe. Despite the financial challenge, we are determined that victims of domestic abuse at all stages of the investigation and at all levels of risk, will receive an excellent policing response.

