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SURREY POLICE - PAPER FOR PCC MANAGEMENT MEETING

Protecting Vulnerable People

This paper has been requested by the Police and Crime Commissioner to demonstrate how Surrey Police are supporting vulnerable people in the areas of domestic abuse, sexual assaults, child abuse/exploitation, and mental health. The paper is further to one on the same subject matter that was delivered to the Police and Crime Commissioner in July 2013 and is intended to comment on specific areas in the intervening period by exception. It also includes what Surrey Police are doing to train officers and staff in the area of mental health. As was mentioned in the previous report, the areas covered are complex and not easily summarised, so the below is not intended to be exhaustive.

Surrey Hubs

The Surrey Police Diversity Directorate have been working alongside the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People to encourage local Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) to go into the Surrey Hubs located in central High Street locations at the heart of the community, so they are easy to find. The hubs are a one-stop-shop of information and support, run by disabled people for disabled people and their carers, and are keen to work alongside the Police. There are currently seven hubs open in Surrey with an aspiration to open one in each of the eleven boroughs and districts. The older hubs have a good working relationship with the SNTs and newer ones which only opened this summer are building those bridges.

Safeguarding Hub

In October 2013, the Central Referral Unit evolved into a Safeguarding Hub. The Safeguarding Hub is based at Guildford Police Station and has representatives from the Police, Children's Services and Mental Health teams; this means that these agencies can share information and make decisions based on all of the information in a timely manner. The aspiration is that there will also be representatives from Health, Probation and Adult Social Care located in the Safeguarding Hub to have a truly Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, and work towards this is ongoing with partners. The Safeguarding Hub has taken on some of functions that used to be completed by the Public Protection Investigation Units (PPIU), such as safeguarding meetings and the risk assessing and reviewing of non-recent child abuse cases. Further plans for early in 2014 include the reviewing of standard risk domestic abuse incidents. All these changes seek to enable PPIU to focus solely on criminal investigations.

Support for Survivors of Domestic Abuse

Surrey Police continue to progress work with Outreach providers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) around referrals and support at court. Work is ongoing with the providers to take all incidents as referrals where it is necessary to carry out an assessment using a Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and honour-based violence questionnaire (DASH). There is also work with the Victim Support Service around the support that they provide and the links with Outreach providers and the Police. Victim

Support will be joining the Police in the Safeguarding Hub in early 2014 thus ensuring that the widest possible support is available. As described in the Six People's Priorities document, the Force is being more robust about arresting suspects when incidents involve Domestic Abuse, resulting in an increase in our arrest rates, and this remains an area of focus.

Sexual Assault

The Rape and Sexual Assault Support Centre (RASASC) have provided the Surrey Police PPIU with training on services available to them to raise maximum operational awareness of options for referral by frontline staff for survivors of rape and serious sexual assault. Police are also working closely with the Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in supporting survivors of sexual offences, ensuring that all the necessary joint working and feedback takes place. Surrey Police are delivering a new course in order to train staff in dealing with survivors of sexual offences and this has now been rolled out successfully within the Force and is part of an ongoing programme of training. As also described in the Six People's Priorities document, the Force has enhanced its victim-based approach for sexual offences, recording crimes at the first point of contact.

Child Abuse

Children's Services have co-located eleven staff within the Safeguarding Hub (see above) between July and October 2013, and already information-sharing, risk-assessing and fast-time decision-making in the response to notifications of children at risk have improved, ensuring greater management of risk.

Chelsea's Choice

A hard-hitting play called 'Chelsea's Choice' is being shown in the county's secondary schools to warn young people of the dangers of Child Sexual Exploitation. The play follows the story of Chelsea, who has fallen out with her friends and family and is befriended by an older man. Three students then find her diary detailing her experiences and, along with their teacher, attempt to understand what has happened and how it can be prevented. The story highlights the warning signs of exploitation such as missing school, behavioural change and keeping secrets, and brings the audience face-to-face with the problems and risks associated with it. The play has had a significant impact in other counties, where a number of allegations have been made following performances, alongside an increase in relevant information being reported.

Mental Health

Mental health issues continue to have a significant impact on policing, with over 20% of section 136 patients still coming into custody centres (approximately half of these are due to a lack of section 136 assessment beds). The Force continues to work with relevant partner agencies and is applying pressure here. A protocol for the admission of section 136 patients with alcohol is not yet signed off, however a protocol for absconders from mental health care is in place, with a local transport agreement for section 135 patients being due in February. An overarching strategy with other agencies is needed to develop thoughtful proposals on what is needed, for example a facility which will accept aggressive section 136 patients, advanced preventative action, 24/7 social care responders, etc. This is a challenging area, and the assistance of the PCC is sought to provide influence and momentum at his level.

National Concordat

Police involvement in mental health issues is likely to be impacted upon by a national concordat due to be launched by the Health Minister. The concordat will provide a template for the reduction of police involvement in treating mental health patients in crisis, and it will be important for all partners in Surrey to fulfil their part in this. The concordat recognises that police officers should not be expected to understand the variety of mental health diagnoses which exist but that they should be able to identify vulnerability and secure the appropriate help for such vulnerability. Once the concordat is launched our training and briefings will be adjusted appropriately.

Training on Mental Health Issues

Throughout 2013, training and briefings on mental health issues have been provided to Contact Centre staff, Custody staff and various other frontline teams by our embedded Surrey and Borders Partnership (SABP) NHS Trust members of the Safeguarding Hub. In February 2014 the Force will be launching a secondary-skill role of 'Mental Health and Learning Disability Liaison Officer'. The 25 officers and staff selected for this role will be given a two-day training package delivered by experts in the field and will be provided with greater understanding about the needs of people living with mental health issues and learning disabilities. It will also equip them with an understanding of how to access services and support in these areas.

Also in February, the Force will be holding a seminar event on disability, partly funded by the PCC; this will allow 120 officers and staff to attend a day of learning and workshops about the four main disability areas, i.e. mental health, learning disability, sensory disability and physical disability. The programme of training and briefings by our SABP embedded staff will also continue throughout the year.

Conclusion

Surrey Police is committed to protecting and supporting vulnerable people. This is by necessity a wide and complex area, involving a number of statutory partners and third sector organisations, and there are many activities which are underway. This document has not intended to describe everything that the Force is doing, but to demonstrate some of the good work and flag areas of note. In particular, the support of the PCC is requested in relation to the issues concerning mental health.