

PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version:

Force	Staffordshire
Police and Crime Commissioner	Ben Adams
Chief Constable	Chris Noble
Title of inspection	A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape - Phase two: Post-charge
Inspectorate	 <p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services</p>
Summary of inspection	<p>This is the second and final part of HMICFRS and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate's joint inspection of the investigation and prosecution of rape in England and Wales.</p> <p>The first part (Phase 1) examined cases from the point when they were reported to the police through to the decision (either by the police or the CPS) to take no further action.</p> <p>This part (Phase 2) examines cases from the point of charge through to their conclusion, and includes those which were decided in court (although we do not make judgements on the decisions of the judges and juries). The combined findings from parts one and two of this inspection provide a comprehensive assessment of the criminal justice system's current approach to rape, and an account of victims' experiences of the system.</p> <p>We commissioned a research report, to hear about victims' experiences directly. And we asked police and the CPS, Government departments and victim representative groups for their own qualitative and quantitative data on what it's like to report a rape in England and Wales today.</p>
Grade	
Recommendations	<p>Recommendation 1 Immediately, police and prosecutors should review and significantly improve communications with victims from the point of charge onwards</p> <p>Recommendation 2 Immediately, the police and the CPS should work collaboratively to ensure that bad character is considered in all rape cases, and progressed wherever it is applicable.</p> <p>Recommendation 3 Immediately, forces should make sure that victims of rape are given the opportunity to make a victim personal statement (VPS) at the earliest possible time, with the option of updating this statement closer to the court trial date.</p>
Areas for improvement	

Police Crime and Commissioner's initial response

Improving victims' experience through the Criminal Justice System is a key priority within my Police and Crime Plan. Communication with Rape and Serious Sexual Offence (RASSO) victims should be consistently frequent by police and prosecutors. I have invested in a dedicated RASSO Lead and Victims Lead to support activity in this area.

Through the RASSO Partnership Group the force and CPS continue to keep the victim at the forefront of every step in the process, focussing on the importance of being kept informed, and keeping in touch with them, even if there is nothing significant to report at any particular stage.

Victim Personal Statements are a key measure of compliance against the Victims Code of Practice and forms part of ongoing performance monitoring which will be reported to the public regularly at Public Performance Meetings.

Chief Constable's response

Following a HMICFRS Joint Thematic Inspection of Police and the Crown Prosecution Service-Response to Rape Phase 2, Staffordshire have remained committed to a shift in culture to improve how the Police and CPS work together. Providing a victim focused service continues to be our focus in delivering better outcomes for victims of Rape.

The Victims Code of Practice (VCoP) provides entitlements to all victims. Under this provision the victim is able to state the agreed method of communication, the frequency of communication and to be provided with regular updates. Officers record all contact information providing the opportunity for scrutiny and ensuring accountability. Compliance with the code is monitored through supervision and the use of Niche. Several force audits provide additional management oversight with opportunities to access quality and compliance which report into the Force Service and Effectiveness Group (SEG).

An electronic survey has been launched that enables RASSO victims to provide valuable feedback once they exit the Criminal Justice System. This enables the victims voice to be heard ensuring their experience influences how our service is delivered. Whilst the current participation of the survey has been low, further development work is ongoing with the Staffordshire Commissioner's office to develop a method of feedback which facilitates engagement. This work is ongoing and has begun to capture the views of RASSO victims and their experience from the point of report to conclusion.

Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) Framework Implementation Group (IFIG) chaired by CPS. Staffordshire is a key stakeholder in regionally delivering an improved bespoke service to RASSO victims. The group are committed to deliver a consistent service to victims throughout their investigation and beyond recognising that the support and victim aftercare does not end upon the conclusion of a trial.

Bad character evidence is engrained in the investigative mindset. Previous criminal convictions are identified at the earliest opportunity to inform key stages of all investigation. Bad character evidence is access and shared with the Crown Prosecution Service. Where appropriate bad character applications are progressed.

A Victim Personal Statement (VPS) is important to all victims of rape. RASSO investigators offer every victim the opportunity to give a VPS so that their voice can be heard in the criminal justice process

enabling others to understand how the crime has affected them. At pivotal points such as after trial but prior to sentencing, victims will be provided further opportunities to update their existing VPS. This provides victims the opportunity to articulate the long-term impact of the offence, associated trauma, and the impact that the trial has had upon them. The VPS statements can be read by the victim or presented by the prosecutor in court prior to sentencing. This enables the court to take into consideration the VPS and all other evidence when deciding upon an appropriate sentence.

Performance and audit

Peer and local auditing and quality assurance work continues through existing mechanisms and a centralised corporate function capability.

We are developing our internal balance score cards to ensure that we are able to monitor our performance in relation to demand, work in tray, victim code compliance and outcomes.

We have now set up the Specialist Crime Command and move towards a Public Protection Unit brigading both investigations and safeguarding under the one governance structure.

Staffordshire Police are well positioned to engage with any national improvement program. There is a clear governance model in place with very effective relationships with both statutory and non-statutory agencies to influence and re-design the systems and processes.

Police Crime and Commissioner's overall comments

As an office we are working closely with partners to see an increase in conviction rates. For victims to support criminal proceedings they need to be believed, they need to not feel like they are the ones on trial, and they need to be able to access whatever support they require when they require it. Implementing the recommendations in this report will help to strengthen these points.

I will work determinedly with the police service and partners to bring about the changes that are needed but it's broader than just policing. I have wider responsibilities to prevent crime, influence the criminal justice system and support victims with services which cannot be delivered by the police. I am focussed on improving outcomes for victims of rape and the CPS are a central part of this improvement work. As chair of our Local Criminal Justice Partnership Board I will work to ensure a better service for victims so they get the justice they deserve.