Cumbria Office of Police and Crime Commissioner

**Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections of Cumbria Constabulary published by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

*Section 33 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days.*

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| **Inspection Title:** | A Joint Inspection – Evidence Led Domestic Abuse Prosecutions |
| **Date Published:** | January 2020 |
| **Type of Inspection:** | National Inspection |
| **Key Findings** | |
| This inspection was undertaken by HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. The national inspection confirmed that the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) recognise domestic abuse as a priority area of work and have continued to commit resources, training and support to ensure that it is treated as such. The police and CPS have domestic abuse leads, at both the national and local  level, who are committed to improving performance in domestic abuse prosecutions. However, this inspection found that neither the police nor the CPS can distinguish those cases where an evidence led approach may be more effective. This is because there are no systems to flag relevant cases – those that are suitable to be built by the police and prosecuted by the CPS – as evidence led.  The inspection found that, in all domestic abuse cases, operational police officers and CPS prosecutors have a good understanding of evidence led prosecutions and understand that cases can proceed even where the victim is unsupportive. But the fact that there are no mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of evidence led prosecutions means that there is no opportunity to learn lessons and share good practice across the organisations. Moreover,  neither the police nor the CPS can quality assure evidence led cases to ensure they are being used appropriately and effectively.  In line with the handling of domestic abuse cases, frontline police officers dealing with domestic abuse incidents are aware of agencies offering support to victims of domestic abuse and refer victims accordingly. In the majority of cases, police officers dealing with domestic abuse cases complete a risk assessment in order to assess the level of risk to the victim and family, and provide this to the CPS at the point of charging referral to assist in the charging decision. However, the quality of the completion of the joint Association of Chief Police Officers and CPS checklist requires improvement, and the risk assessment is not always provided to CPS in relevant  cases. | |
| **Recommendations:** | |
| * Police supervisors and Crown Prosecution Service legal managers should maximise opportunities to share examples of good work and successful outcomes with their teams * The police should review training plans in order to ensure that all appropriate staff, both frontline officers and investigators, are trained how to handle domestic abuse cases * Police forces with domestic abuse champions should raise awareness of the role and seek to utilise them to maximum effect * Police forces should ensure that training, messaging and guidance is clear that evidence led cases should benefit from the same quality of investigation, early gathering of evidence and supervisory oversight as other domestic abuse cases, particularly in cases where the victim does not support police action. Domestic abuse champions should reinforce this message. * Police should ensure that investigations and decisions to take no further action in domestic abuse cases receive the same robustness of supervisory oversight as other domestic abuse cases. | |
| **PCC & Chief Constable Response to Report and Recommendation:** | |
| The Police and Crime Commissioner welcomes this report, “I have reviewed the recommendations from a Cumbria perspective and I am assured the Constabulary is making good progress against the national recommendations. I have received assurance regarding the sharing of best practice of domestic abuse cases across teams and the processes established to review training plans, ensuring staff are trained. The Constabulary has undertaken a significant amount of work and is self-assessing the implementation of domestic abuse operations. I await the local findings and performance measures in relation to these.” | |