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:** | #21866 A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service’s response to rape – Phase two: Post Charge |
| **Date Published:** | 25/02/2022 |
| **Type of Inspection:** | National Inspection |
| **Key Findings** | |
| 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.  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 CPS) to take no further action.  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’ experience of the system.  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.  This report sets out our findings | |
| **Recommendations:** | |
| 1. #21912 - Immediately, police and prosecutors should review and significantly improve communications with victims from the point of charge onwards. 2. #21961 – 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. 3. #22005 - 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. | |
| **PCC & Chief Constable Response to Report and Recommendation:** | |
| The Police and Crime Commissioner welcomes the Joint Thematic Inspection of the Police and Crown Prosecution Service’s response to rape – Phase Two: Post Charge - by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).  “My office will continue to commission and work with partner services supporting victims of rape, sexual assault and abuse to continually improve the support available to victims throughout the criminal justice process.  “A recent Public Accountability Conference which we held with our Chief Constable reassured me that the Constabulary takes cases of rape very seriously and works to provide a positive outcome for the victim. I have been assured that significant work is being undertaken in partnership with CPS to further improve the progression of cases through the criminal justice process, where it is appropriate.”  Victims Personal Statements are a mandatory aspect of the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP). Victims of Rape are entitled to an enhanced service under VCOP, and our Constabulary monitor the delivery of the area closely.  Bad character is always considered by our Constabulary and appropriate research is conducted on Police systems as part of the investigative process. Cumbria Constabulary are working towards “Offender Focused Investigation” where the conduct of the suspect is at the forefront of the investigation. Cumbria Constabulary has been identified as one of the potential forces to be part of the Op Soteria extension.  Op Soteria is a NPCC led, and Home Office funded programme that will see potential police forces and CPS areas work with academics **to transform how the police and CPS handle investigations into rape and sexual offences.** It will result in a new model for rape investigation to be adopted nationally. | |