

5th January 2018

The Rt Honourable Amber Rudd MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary

RESPONSE TO 'A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE POLICE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE' PUBLISHED ON 14 NOVEMBER 2017

In my first term as Police and Crime Commissioner, I prioritised tackling domestic and sexual abuse with my Police and Crime Plan and challenged the Constabulary to improve their processes and response to domestic abuse which is a high volume yet complex crime. Part of this challenge included giving victims the confidence to report these crimes to the police because we know that abuse is often unreported. Reports of domestic abuse have increased in Avon and Somerset by 51% over the last two years (comparing records between 1/12/14-30/11/15 with 1/12/16 – 30/11/17), and I believe that there has been a significant positive shift in policing culture as well as processes and improved provision of support that has instilled confidence in more victims to come forward. I am therefore pleased to see that the HMICFRS progress report also identified significant improvement in forces' approach to domestic abuse.

The report notes that nationally domestic abuse accounts for over 10% of all recorded crime and that the increased reporting results in increased demand for the police service but also for children's social services, health, education and probation. This is in line with my firm belief that it is imperative that agencies must work together to protect victims and have in place the right level of resources to meet this demand and improve outcomes for victims.

I have noted the areas for improvement nationally as set out in the report which I have summarised as:

- Improving risk assessments (I have been assured that DASH procedures will be reviewed by the Constabulary).
- Taking appropriate positive action in relation to the role of arrest
- Building cases for the victim (It has been clear to me that the use of body worn video has been an important step for the Constabulary in terms of its response to domestic abuse and I will continue to watch with interest the impact this has on evidence-led prosecutions).
- Reaching a shared view with CPS on referrals and prosecutions
- Agreeing a nationally consistent view of the elements of a thorough police response
- Developing consistent performance measures

In response, I have commissioned an assurance report on domestic abuse that I shall review in later this month at the Police and Crime Board. Within this report will be an update on which areas for improvement identified in the HMICFRS report are most applicable to Avon and Somerset and what plans are in place to ensure these are addressed. Separately I have been assured that the Constabulary Domestic Abuse Group will be refreshing the delivery plan and procedural guidance in response to the inspection.

In conclusion, tackling domestic abuse is no less important to me today than it was when I first took office. I hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering my Plan and the Constabulary's response to domestic abuse is something I monitor closely under my primary priority of 'Protect the most vulnerable from harm'.

This response is published on the OPCC website (<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Openness/Audits-and-Inspections/Her-Majestys-Inspectorate-of-Constabulary.aspx>).

Regards

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Sue Mountstevens".

SUE MOUNTSTEVENS
Police and Crime Commissioner
for Avon & Somerset

cc. Wendy Williams, HMI
Chief Constable Andy Marsh, Avon & Somerset Constabulary