

18th December 2019

The Rt Honourable Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary

RESPONSE TO 'THE POOR RELATION: THE POLICE AND CPS RESPONSE TO CRIMES AGAINST OLDER PEOPLE' PUBLISHED ON 17TH JULY 2019

Based on the Office of National Statistics 2018 estimates the Avon and Somerset area has more older people (65 years and over) than the national average: 19.7% compared to 18.3%. However this varies greatly by the five local authorities and in Somerset nearly a quarter of the population is already in this older age range. Understanding this data brings home the importance of the findings in this report. Our data also tells us that this age group feels less safe than others.

The broader concerns about supporting vulnerable people are understood and in my Police and Crime Plan the first priority is *protect the most vulnerable from harm* and the first two objectives are *identify victims and those at risk of victimisation and effectively engage with and safeguard them* and *ensure the provision of effective services to enable victims to cope and recover*. This demonstrates my commitment to ensuring vulnerable people are protected and supported by the police and partner organisations.

As the force area covers five local authorities the challenge of partnership working is exacerbated as the local authorities have different approaches to safeguarding and this report highlights this is a national problem. So any impetus from national agencies to bring greater consistency is welcomed.

The recommendations applicable for the Chief Constable are noted as:

- Within six months, chief constables should make sure that victim needs assessments are always completed.
- Within three months, chief constables should conduct analysis of the current and future demand for adult safeguarding, including the gap in knowledge that may exist from those cases where referrals aren't made because of errors or omissions. This analysis should be incorporated into force management statements (FMSs).
- Within six months, chief constables should work with police and crime commissioners and their mayoral equivalents, and other relevant organisations, to review whether victim support services can be provided in a better way.

- Within three months, chief constables should ensure that adult safeguarding referrals are always made when appropriate, with effective processes in place to make sure this happens. The NPCC lead for adults at risk should advise chief constables as to how this is best achieved.

Additionally the area for improvement is noted as:

- Within six months, chief constables should find good ways to assess the current demands on the police made by older people. These assessments should include a prediction of future changes in demand, account for the work of other organisations, and be incorporated into FMSs.

In response to the recommendations, I can confirm that the force has processes in place in order to try and ensure victim needs assessments are completed. In the first instance, where officers identify vulnerability they should complete either the national Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment and/or the force's own vulnerability assessment called BRAG (Blue Red Amber Green – the tiered approach to assessing vulnerability). The use of BRAG and DASH is monitored both at a strategic level and by supervisors for individuals. When a victim has been identified as vulnerable they should be referred into the Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit (LSU) (which deals with victim and witness support). If the Lighthouse team is able to make contact with the victim, and they give consent, a common needs assessment is then undertaken to help determine how best that victim can be supported.

The force reports performance to the five Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Boards. This indicates current demand is approximately 3,000 adult safeguarding crimes and 1500 adult safeguarding incidents per year. The more serious crimes are allocated to the Investigations directorate and adult safeguarding crimes are approximately 6% of their overall workload. The force cannot currently quantify the number of Adult Social Care referrals received that resulted in police intervention. The force is working with Local Authorities to share this data and find out if errors/omissions are recorded to enable analysis of 'hidden' demand. The force will conduct analysis of its own data to identify trends but will also benefit from wider research conducted with the Open University. This information will help inform completion of next year's Force Management Statement (FMS).

Initial victim support services underwent a review at the end of 2018, resulting in the merge of the Safeguarding Co-ordination Unit with the Lighthouse Victim and Witness Care Service (co-commissioned by my office) to form one streamlined service, the LSU. This change will be subject to a post implementation review at the end of 2019 to further explore areas for improvement. This area of business is closely scrutinised by my office and there is regular performance reporting including data about onward referrals to enhanced services. In addition, the Constabulary worked with my office during the re-commissioning process for victim support services which are now in place for the next five years. In the first six months of the 2019/20 financial year those commissioned services have supported about 580 victims aged 65 or over. On a quarterly basis my office host the Victims Services Provider Forum in order that best practice can be identified and shared. There is also open dialogue with local authorities' commissioned services to feedback any issues raised by victims.

I discussed earlier the processes in place to help ensure vulnerability is identified, across the force, and how LSU are the central team that deal with these vulnerable people once

identified. On top of the mandated manual process there are a couple of 'safety nets' used to provide additional security in the process. All occurrences on Niche that have the safeguarding adults tags are automatically referred into the LSU and a separate automated tool identifies those instances where vulnerability may be present and these are reviewed by the LSU to identify missed referrals. In terms of onward referrals of adult safeguarding to local authorities this is not a process that can be automatically counted as it requires the judgment of a Safeguarding Officer to decide if a case meets the threshold for onward referral. However the LSU is looking to refine its performance reporting and as part of this cases will be dip sampled to check and test whether officers are making the correct decisions to refer or not. The Constabulary has not yet had guidance from the NPCC on this recommendation.

In terms of assessing demand the force has a strong grasp of this and the last PEEL inspection report (before this year) rated the force as Outstanding in how well it understands demand. This is done, not just by calls for service, but is also analysed by complexity. The force also has a tool which predicts future demand throughout the year based on historical demand – this tool learns the more time passes and the more data that is input. Following from this report the force will use the CPS definition of an older person to analyse this demand data focussed on this demographic which will inform future response to the FMS. In order to provide a 'whole system' approach to this analysis it is important to be able to have and share data with partners. Data sharing is already being considered in other forums, such as the Violence Reduction Units, and the force has recently agreed to expand its Data Science and Innovation Centre which has the remit of developing partnership data sharing.

In conclusion, I acknowledge the issues contained within this and I recognise the work that has been carried out by the force and some of the good practice already in place, prior to these recommendations being given. However, where there are still gaps in the service delivery, I feel that the Constabulary are taking steps to address the recommendations that are applicable to them.

This response is published on the OPCC website (<https://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Openness/Audits-and-Inspections/HMICFRS.aspx>).

Regards



SUE MOUNTSTEVENS
Police and Crime Commissioner
for Avon & Somerset

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

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