

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

DATE	19 November 2018
REPORT OF	Assurance and Policy Manager, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
SUBJECT	Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panel: Progress Report
STATUS	Open

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the Police and Crime Panel with an update on a Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panel currently being developed by the OPCC. The scrutiny panel is part of a regional/national initiative which aims to review the methods used by police forces when investigating domestic abuse cases. The initiative focuses on domestic abuse victims who repeatedly receive Outcome 16 - evidential difficulties: victim does not support (or has withdrawn support from) police action. The scheme forms part of the OPCC Delivery Plan 2018-19.

2. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Members of the Police and Crime Panel note the progress made and the level of partnership work undertaken in collaboration with personnel from key agencies who are involved in supporting domestic abuse victims.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following the introduction of a regional initiative, as part of a Whole System Approach (WSA) covering the seven-forces in the North East Region, to establish scrutiny panels for the purpose of reviewing the methods used by police teams to investigate domestic abuse, Humberside OPCC established an independent domestic abuse scrutiny panel.
- 3.2 Strategic level personnel were invited from independent agencies who work closely with victims of domestic abuse, so that their expertise may provide greater insight into the reasons why some victims do not receive a positive outcome. It is hoped that recommendations from the panel will lead to improved outcomes for victims, and a reduction of those resulting in Outcome 16 in particular. The focus of the panel is very much about the 'journey of the victim' and not an isolated case. Case files are selected where a number of incidents have been reported, but which continually result in 'evidential difficulties'.

- 3.3 An excellent response to the invitation to join the panel was received and the panel convened in September 2018 to review and discuss its first case. During the panel meeting it became apparent that the focus should not be entirely upon the police interaction with the victim but also upon the methods of all agencies involved in supporting domestic abuse victims or offenders. The OPCC is now seeking permission to give panel members advance notification of the cases selected for scrutiny.
- 3.4 By providing advance notification, it is hoped that panel members will bring information relating to the case, which shows any support provided to the victim or offender. This information will contribute in building a wider picture of the whole support system which develops around a domestic abuse victim. Therefore, the intended method for scrutiny has already evolved from just reviewing police action, to scrutinising all organisations and their contribution to supporting victims.

4. FUTURE STEPS

- 4.1 Once security approval has been received, further meetings will be held and recommendations shared between the police force and all agencies involved in the panel.
- 4.2 Alongside the panel, the OPCC is developing focus groups for the purpose of gaining feedback from domestic abuse victims on their experience of the police investigation. It is hoped that their contribution will further highlight reasons why such victims often withdraw their support for police investigations and how they can be helped to progress their initial report to the police through to a more positive outcome.

5. POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 At the first panel meeting, positive feedback was received from the panel members, who are keen to continue working with the OPCC. They felt that this type of scrutiny was much needed and many asked whether they could bring information about any work carried out by their own organisations and fully supported the review of the wider support network around victims and offenders.
- 5.2 Further progress reports will be provided to the Police and Crime Panel as agreed.