



**To:** Business Coordination Board

**From:** Chief Constable

**Date:** 02 October 2014

## DOMESTIC ABUSE GOVERNANCE

### 1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to report to the Business Coordination Board (“the Board”) Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s (“the Constabulary”) Action Plan for tackling domestic abuse.

### 2. Background

2.1 In November 2013, as part of a national programme, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) undertook its initial inspection on the Constabulary’s response to domestic abuse. HMIC made fifteen recommendations on how to improve delivery. These ranged from reviewing capacity, training, structures and processes through to partnership working and leadership.

2.2 When the HMIC inspection team revisited in February 2014 they highlighted the exceptional progress that the Constabulary had made, noting substantial improvements to victims of violence. It was encouraging that HMIC provided re-assurance that it was not the case that the Constabulary was missing some integral part of tackling domestic abuse. They noted that time was required to further embed working practices and to monitor performance.

2.3 A paper was submitted to the Board on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014, which gave a comprehensive update on how the Constabulary was focusing its energies on improving service for victims. This report provides further detail of the Constabulary’s response including the development of an action plan under the direct leadership of the Chief Constable. Progress has been tracked on a monthly basis through the scrutiny of the Chief Constable’s Safeguarding Board.

### **3. Formation of National Oversight Group**

- 3.1 The Constabulary was not alone in being identified as an area where more could be done to tackle abuse; virtually all Forces had room for improvement. HMIC's national report was published on 27 March 2014, which received significant media coverage. As part of the media launch, the Home Secretary made a clear direction that Forces across the country needed to improve. She specifically cited "culture, attitude and poor skills" as being at the root of the challenge faced by Forces.
- 3.2 At this point she formed, and took the Chair of, a National Oversight Group for Domestic Abuse. Specialists from Cambridgeshire are sitting on this Group and have played an important role in shaping the national approach. One of the key directions from the Home Secretary's Oversight Group is the requirement for all Forces to produce Action Plans by 1st September 2014 to improve the response to domestic abuse in their areas. Whilst having some common structure, the content of the Plan is unique to the needs of each Force area.
- 3.3 The Constabulary was in a good position on this, already having a detailed plan in place with clear levels of governance and oversight. HMIC had provided support for the content of the Action Plan and upon their re-inspection acknowledged that demonstrable results had been achieved within a short period of time.

### **4. The next steps and strides for the Constabulary**

- 4.1 Forces have worked together (alongside the College of Policing) to identify a comprehensive list of recommendations that enable a Force and partners to deliver an excellent service to victims. Overall, there were 125 areas identified. These were collated and formed a self-assessment toolkit. Each of these areas has been reviewed to help gauge the current effectiveness of service provision.
- 4.2 This assessment has re-enforced the view that the Constabulary's Leadership, Training, Partnerships and Processes are increasingly effective and working at a good level. It is clear that the work undertaken by the Constabulary since November 2013 has been comprehensive. We are now in a much stronger position, which allows the fine tuning of quality of delivery throughout the process.
- 4.3 The Safeguarding Board has not only provided a governance structure to ensure that all recommendations are being embedded, but is also acting as a wider forum to transform mind-sets across the Force; re-enforcing the importance of prioritising according to risk. The Constabulary is believed to be the only Force in the Country that has developed and delivered a bespoke domestic abuse training package to every front line officer or those involved in contact management. This training has received excellent feedback.
- 4.4 As time has passed, it has become clear that the foundations are now strongly in place which allows the fine tuning of quality of delivery. The self-assessment tool has

re-enforced this view that the next stage of our improvement is to provide increased focus on the way we deal with specific cases. Leadership, Business Processes, and Training are now operating at a strong level.

4.5 The areas that are now deemed to be the key to enhance are:

- Initial attendance at incidents - Getting there promptly armed with all the information, supporting victims, taking positive action against perpetrators and gathering evidence effectively.
- Investigating incidents – Improving specialism and knowledge in Investigators, significantly increasing the number of “evidence based prosecutions” (where there is no statement of complaint) and working in greater partnership with the CPS, challenging decisions where appropriate.
- Identifying learning from both a local and national level, ensuring policies, procedures and staff attitudes are committed to continuous improvement. An essential element of this is incorporating the views of victims through surveys.

4.6 As a result, the new Domestic Abuse Action Plan focuses on these three areas. It was submitted to the Home Office on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014. Scrutiny will continue to be provided through the Force Safeguarding Board.

4.7 A copy of the Constabulary’s Plan is attached at Appendix 1.

## **5. Conclusion**

5.1 The Home Secretary’s view of deficiencies in “culture, attitude and poor skills” is an accurate assessment of the historic issues that have impacted on the best service possible being provided to victims. The Constabulary is confident that culture and attitude has been addressed and the next stage of our continuous improvement is to increase our level of skill throughout the investigative progress.

## **6. Recommendation**

6.1 It is recommended that the Board note the contents of this paper.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

<b>Source Document (s)</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>	<b>Location</b>
<p><a href="http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/cambridgeshire-approach-to-tackling-domestic-abuse.pdf">http://www.hmic.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/cambridgeshire-approach-to-tackling-domestic-abuse.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-leads-action-on-police-response-to-domestic-violence-and-abuse">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-leads-action-on-police-response-to-domestic-violence-and-abuse</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/business-coordination-board/june-12-bcb">http://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk/business-coordination-board/june-12-bcb</a></p>	T/Superintendent Jon Hutchinson	Cambridgeshire Constabulary Headquarters