



Report from the
Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys
To the
Dyfed-Powys Police and Crime Panel

Mental Health and Policing

July 2019

Introduction

Within the 2017-21 Police and Crime Plan, the Commissioner set out his intention to safeguard the vulnerable by “enhancing our understanding and our response to people with mental illhealth”. Specifically, committing to:

- work with partners to improve our understanding of the demands associated with mental ill health and to develop a more cohesive response to mental ill health related incidents;
- advocate a reasonable and proportionate response by front-line staff when dealing with people experiencing mental ill health;
- engage and work with people with lived experience of mental ill health to improve our understanding of the issues they face; and
- support the Chief Constable to ensure that people suffering from mental ill health are treated in a health facility and not detained in custody.

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate progress made to date.

National Picture

Following their Police Efficiency Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection fieldwork, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published a national report late in 2018 titled ‘Policing and Mental Health: Picking up the Pieces’, which stated:

“Whilst the police service is doing a good job in difficult circumstances, there are concerns over whether the police should be involved in responding to mental health problems at the current level. The report emphasises that there needs to be a radical rethink and a longer-term solution to what has become a national crisis.”

The key findings in this national report were:

- **The police are working beyond their duty**

In the Commissioner’s response to the report, it was highlighted that Chief Constable Collins reported that local health board institutions feature as one of the highest callers reporting concerns for public safety and welfare.

- **Forces need a clearer picture of their mental health-related demand**

The All-Wales demand snap shot days were highlighted as an example of good practice within the report. These are due to be replicated on a local as well as England and Wales level in the coming year.

- **Forces are good at recognising and responding to mental ill health**

Dyfed-Powys Police's mental health triage, in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board, was extended from 4 to 7 days per week from May 2018. Dyfed-Powys Police are in the process of reviewing the impact of this service.

- **Quality and collaboration relating to mental health training is inconsistent**

Dyfed-Powys Police's training package has been reviewed and amended with the support of local mental health partners, and is now jointly delivered to police officers and staff and partners.

- **Forces need to involve / consult with those with lived experience of mental ill health and police contact to better inform their strategies, training and response.**

Dyfed-Powys Police has recently conducted workshops with mental health service users and their carers in order to consider their experiences of dealing with the police. The insights gathered will support the Force to make further improvements in how they respond to individuals in crisis.

- **Early intervention is critical to reducing demand and associated costs.**

Within their 2019 Force Management Statement, Dyfed-Powys Police identified a gap in the provision for persons detained in police custody for a criminal offence who show signs of mental illness. The Pathfinder diversionary scheme has also experienced similar issues with accessing mental health service support. Force and health representatives are working together to develop a suitable pathway for custody staff to use to ensure vulnerable detainees receive the most appropriate support.

HMICFRS, Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons and the Care Quality Commission have indicated that they will be undertaking a feasibility study of mental health pathways across the criminal justice system during 2019/20 in order to target future inspection activity. Work has begun to identify work streams which together will encompass treatment of both victims and offenders.

Work of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Oversight and independent assurance

The Commissioner maintains oversight of the Force's response to mental health via attendance at the Strategic Mental Health Group and data provided through the Performance and Outcomes Board on a quarterly basis. Forces collate data on detention transport to places of safety and report this to the Home Office within the annual data return. Dyfed-Powys Police also review all mental health assessments which take over 10 hours to be completed.

The Commissioner's independent custody visitors received an input on mental health in police custody at their recent annual training day. Dyfed-Powys are one of 7¹ Commissioners' offices preparing to pilot a new enhanced custody visiting scheme from August 2019. Detailed reviews of custody records of vulnerable detainees will consider their full journey through custody in order to get a better insight into the totality of care extended to them.

Awareness and partnership working

The recently formed National Assembly for Wales Cross Party group on policing, sponsored and chaired by Chair of the Assembly Committee on Communities and local Government, John Griffiths AM, has held a focused session on the impact of mental health on policing services. This was an opportunity for Commissioners and Chief Constables to highlight the extensive pressures being placed on policing resources due to pressures in other services, in order to lobby for additional support for policing. In direct relation to this, the Commissioner urged the Home Secretary to support that Wales' proportion of the additional £2 billion per year for mental health crisis care, which is understood to be £2 million, be focused on supporting the police to meet the ever increasing demands which mental ill health is placing on an already stretched service.

The Commissioner recently contributed from the OPCC budget towards a project within Force aimed at improving the management of officers and staff through their parenting journey. The objective of the project, which was launched on 20th May 2019, is to provide health and wellbeing support and guidance, as well as ensuring that staff remain engaged with the organisation thus continuing the ethos of Dyfed-Powys as a family force.

¹ Other pilot areas are: Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire, Humberside, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Thames Valley.

Engagement Activity

The Commissioner is committed to engaging fully with all communities across Dyfed-Powys. In order for this to happen, barriers for different groups of people must be identified and addressed. He regularly visits mental health groups across the Force area to hear the experiences of people with mental ill health and their views on policing and crime issues. These engagement activities are ongoing, and as well as helping to inform the Commissioner's understanding of mental health issues on a grassroots level, the Commissioner also occasionally supports the work of mental health support services through financial contributions. Some examples of recent engagements are detailed below.

- ***Rural Crime Event in Carmarthen Mart***

The OPCC attended this event which was focused on mental health in rural settings. It was an opportunity to start building relationships with organisations such as Tir Dewi (who provide help and support for farmers in crisis across West Wales), DPJ Foundation (who support people in rural communities with poor mental health, especially men in the agricultural sector) and RABI (financial support to farming people in hardship of all ages).

In addition to this, the Commissioner's annual St David's Day Conference 2020 will focus on "Supporting Rural Communities", and will include raising awareness of mental ill health in rural and farming communities.

- ***VC Art Gallery***

The Commissioner visited the VC Gallery in Haverfordwest, a community art initiative that helps veterans, disabled people and the young and old using art as a creative way to cut social exclusion, gain confidence and have fun. The visit gave the Commissioner a greater understanding of mental health issues experienced by individuals, including military veterans, and the rehabilitation that VC Gallery can support. The Commissioner has since given a donation to support the work of the Gallery, which includes positive work with the local Neighbourhood Policing Team.

- ***Dyfodol Powys Futures***

The Commissioner witnessed the valuable work of Dyfodol Powys Futures in the community and the support they provide to isolated young people across Powys. Current projects included a substance misuse project in Newtown and a sensory, movement and relaxation programme for children in several locations across Powys. The Commissioner also shared information about his funding opportunities and how this could enhance their outreach work. The organisation were also given the opportunity to discuss any policing issues they had and whether they felt supported by their local officers.

- **Area 43**

The Commissioner visited Area 43, who offer a fully professional and confidential counselling service to young people between the ages of 16 and 25. They also deliver a schools-based counselling service to all secondary school aged young people and year 6 primary pupils across Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire. The Commissioner met with staff and service users to explore working with the Commissioner's Youth Forum and how best to reach disadvantaged young people.

- **Pembrokeshire People First**

The Commissioner's Engagement Team worked closely with Pembrokeshire People First, an independent charity run by and for adults with learning difficulties and autism, to deliver an engagement day for their members and students from Pembrokeshire College. The local Neighbourhood Policing Team were also invited to attend to encourage face to face engagement with the police in an informal and comfortable environment. As well as the group sharing their views on the police and local issues, invaluable information and advice was provided on hate crime, mate crime, and their rights were they to be stopped and searched by the police. The Commissioner's Team has also held initial discussions with Carmarthen People First on undertaking a similar approach with their members.

- **Alzheimer's Society, Ammanford and Mencap Aberaeron**

The Commissioner visited these groups to hear workers' and service users' views on local policing. He also raised awareness of Dyfed-Powys Police's Pegasus scheme, which supports individuals with communication difficulties to contact the police.

Commissioned services

The recent needs assessment completed on behalf of the Commissioner identified that access to mental health services is one of the top issues faced by all OPCC commissioned services when referring clients onto specialist services. As this is a core requirement for health to deliver, it is not intended that the Commissioner becomes a default for funding services where gaps exist in statutory services. The Commissioner has however committed to continue to lobby partners and Ministers regarding the poor access and provision of local mental health services for both offenders and victims. The Local Criminal Justice Board meeting in July is scheduled to focus on mental health in order to review and explore the current situation from the perspective of all Criminal Justice partner organisations.

Grant funding

The Commissioner has awarded a grant of £6,920 to Eiriol Mental Health Advocacy to investigate the reasons leading to re-offending by prison leavers who suffer with mental health issues. Its intention is to break the cycle of re-offending, preventing new crimes by providing bespoke one to one advocacy services. This ensures each individual receives the right tailored support at the right time, prior to and at the point of release.

Conclusion

The Commissioner is making positive progress under each strand of his commitment to safeguard the vulnerable, namely to:

- work with partners to improve our understanding of the demands associated with mental ill health and to develop a more cohesive response to mental ill health related incidents;
- advocate a reasonable and proportionate response by front-line staff when dealing with people experiencing mental ill health;
- engage and work with people with lived experience of mental ill health to improve our understanding of the issues they face; and
- support the Chief Constable to ensure that people suffering from mental ill health are treated in a health facility and not detained in custody.

The Commissioner's oversight of the Mental Health Triage Scheme and the rights and dignity of custody detainees provides assurance that vulnerable individuals are being appropriately supported by Dyfed-Powys Police.

The Commissioner's significant range of engagement activities and partnership working ensures he has regular opportunities to understand individuals' perspectives and experiences. This understanding is fed back into the Force to influence policy decisions as well as influencing the Commissioner's lobbying activity.

The Commissioner's financial contributions to charities based within the Dyfed-Powys Force area aids to enhance the network of support services for vulnerable people which reduces the risk of individuals needing to be detained. The Commissioner continues to work locally with partners such as the health service and nationally with other Police and Crime Commissioners, Assembly Members and Welsh Government to lobby for improved access to mental health crisis care. This work will progress further during 2019/20 as the Commissioner assumes the role of All Wales Policing Group Chair and through the Policing Partnership Board for Wales.