

Response to Questions Submitted

PCC Response

This inspection report comes at a time when violence against women and girls is nationally at the forefront of many discussions, and rightly so.

I welcome the focus by HMCFRS on this matter at this stage, but we must acknowledge that violence against women and girls (VAWG) has been a priority for myself, Dyfed-Powys Police and policing in Wales for some time now.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) remains a priority for Dyfed Powys as governed by my existing Police and Crime Plan, the Force Control Strategy and Chief Constable's priorities. I can confirm that it will also feature strongly in my new Police and Crime Plan, soon to be published.

I am in regular discussions with my Welsh Police and Crime Commissioner colleagues in relation to Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Abuse (VAWDASV) and how we can maximise our effectiveness in Wales. We have agreed to work with Welsh Government on a VAWDASV Blueprint for Wales. Together, we have also lobbied the Home Office with regards to a missed opportunity in the Policing Bill: As drafted, the Policing Bill does not explicitly include domestic violence and abuse and sexual violence and therefore misses the opportunity to increase the protection given to victims and survivors of these forms of violence and abuse.

VAWG has long been a priority for the Criminal Justice Board in Wales, and features as a golden thread across all the priorities in the current work programme. In addition to this, victims of rape and sexual offence are a specific work stream within the victims and witness priority. My Local Criminal Justice Board delivery plan mirrors this and focuses on provision of remote evidence sites and court facilities for victims of VAWDASV.

Dyfed-Powys Police continue to develop the Vulnerability Hub, which provides specialist support to officers dealing with domestic violence incidents and helps to improve the service to victims. Recent activity includes a grant-funded specialist role within the Hub to improve the management of domestic abuse perpetrators.

Dyfed-Powys Police continue to make significant progress in reducing the number of investigations open for longer than 12 months.

Dyfed-Powys Police's End-to-End project continues to focus on putting victims at the heart of everything by understanding demand, improving processes and influencing culture to enable them to be efficient and effective.

My office has recently secured additional funds of over £600,000 from the Ministry of Justice to increase the support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence in the Dyfed-Powys area. The funding will help support victims who have experienced Domestic Abuse or Sexual Violence at any point in their life. The extra specialist independent support that will now be available will be provided by a wide range of community based support organisations, following an increase in the demand for support. Nine additional roles will be created and specialist training for local professionals will also be provided, with the aim of building capacity within domestic abuse refuges such as schools and pupil referral units, to enable children to access early interventions by adults they trust in a safe space. I am proud to say that this additional funding brings the total investment in victim services to over £1.7million during 2021/22, combining Ministry of Justice and core funding from my office. I continue to fund numerous support services for people affected by domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault across the force area.

My office has also recently submitted a bid to the Home Office's Safety of Women at Night Fund to provide innovative approaches to creating safe spaces for women in our communities, particularly the night-time economy and recognising our student and transient holiday populations. The outcome of this submission is expected in November.

Work will continue to promote the Dyfed-Powys Victim Engagement Forum, managed by my team, to ensure feedback is sought directly from victims in terms of the service delivered by Dyfed-Powys Police. There are many publicised opportunities for victims to join the Forum, including via our VAWDASV services and recently through the Victims' Commissioner's Office where an email was distributed to victims from the local area who responded to the Victims' Commissioner's annual 'Victims' Survey'. Victim Engagement Forum members recently fed back on their experience of the impact of COVID-19 on victim support services, and will soon be asked to provide feedback on Dyfed-Powys Police's leaflet which provides victims of sexual offences with specialist guidance and advice.

Additionally, work is underway to explore the situation locally in terms of how safe women and girls feel on a local level, and what steps I can take to ensure trust and confidence in the police. A public consultation will launch in November 2021.

My team are currently working alongside Dyfed-Powys Police to jointly promote the new Street Safe tool that is being piloted at the moment. It is available on all Police Forces' websites and is a service for members of the public to anonymously tell Dyfed-Powys Police about public places where they have felt unsafe, because of environmental issues, e.g. street lighting, abandoned buildings or vandalism and/or because of some behaviours, e.g. being followed or verbally abused.

Given the specific HMICFRS report finding that the *"Use of protective powers (such as Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs)), is inconsistent, and this is unexplained"*, consideration will be given as to

whether it would be appropriate and suitable for members of my Quality Assurance Panel to scrutinise Dyfed-Powys Police's use of protective powers.

Along the same vein, scrutiny activity recently undertaken by HMICFRS, The College of Policing and the Independent Office for Police Conduct has led to the recommendation that Chief Constables should review, and if necessary refresh their policy on DVPNs and DVPOs to ensure there is clear governance and communication to prioritise their effective use. I have sought detailed evidence from Dyfed-Powys Police with regard to each of the recommendations contained within the HMICFRS report and am reassured by the actions taken to date and those planned for the future. I will be seeking ongoing assurance of the delivery of key outputs relating to this.

Specifically in relation to the implementation of the findings and recommendations set out within the HMICFRS report on the Police response to violence against women and girls, I have sought reassurance from the Chief Constable regarding current and ongoing work in respect of the report's recommendations. I have been advised that a Force Strategy is under development for the management of the report's recommendations. Dyfed-Powys Police's head of Vulnerability will lead on this piece of work, and the recommendations will be monitored and discussed at Dyfed-Powys Police's Strategic Vulnerability Board. My Director of Commissioning and Policy and Engagement Advisor both sit on the Strategic Vulnerability Board, and will keep me up-to-date in terms of progress reported against the recommendations. They will also be able to put questions to the Board on my behalf.

I will continue to scrutinise progress updates from Chief Constable Parmenter and her senior management team. In addition to this, my Quality and Assurance Advisor attends a monthly meeting with Dyfed-Powys Police's HMICFRS Team, where regular updates are provided in terms of progress made against recommendations.

With regard to the issues which now present as a result of the tragic murder of Sarah Everard, HMICFRS' recommendations of course require strong leadership to reaffirm the exacting standards held by the Police Service in the UK and to demonstrate a commitment to tackle violent crime, particularly when used against women. As a result, and in addition to the Governance arrangements already outlined for the recommendations, the Chief Constable will be appointing a Chief Officer Lead for this area of work to ensure it has the adequate level of support and scrutiny moving forward.

The Chief Constable has also written directly to Sir Tom Winsor advising that it would be advantageous for the Government to provide continued funding, not only for policing, but for other public sectors, to make real change in all aspects of life in order to deliver the principles of the Government's Tackling VAWG Strategy.

I am confident that Dyfed-Powys Police recognises the importance of both implementing HMICFRS' recommendations and of the continued focus of policing in this area. I trust that the above provides reassurance regarding

the commitment of Dyfed-Powys Police to address the recommendations, as well as my ongoing scrutiny and oversight of this area.

The above information will feature in my formal response to the HMICFRS inspection report on the 'police response to violence against women and girls', due to be submitted on 12 November.