

March 24, 2014

HMIC Domestic Abuse Report – Response

Chief Constable Colette Paul fully accepts that the historic service provided to victims of domestic abuse by Bedfordshire Police fell short of expectations, following publication of a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) report published today (March 24).

While acknowledging the report, which gives a snapshot of the service provision last November, Chief Constable Paul has already addressed many of the issues raised with an immediate review, restructure and implementation of a detailed improvement plan.

At the heart of the plan is a vision to create a culture within Bedfordshire Police which makes 'safeguarding everyone's responsibility' with the emphasis on 'wrap around care' to ensure victims have the support they need and that includes the all-important job of keeping individuals informed – a major driver of victim satisfaction.

Commenting on the report Chief Constable Colette Paul said: "Following the inspection it was clear things were not as good as they should be when it comes to dealing with victims of domestic abuse. Since then we have worked very hard to improve the service we provide and we are committed to making safeguarding those affected by this crime the number one priority. The number of officers working on the assessment of victim's vulnerability has been increased and there will be increased scrutiny."

"We all know that this type of offence is one that is traditionally under-reported for a whole variety of societal reasons. However in recent months we've seen an increase in reporting of domestic abuse, which is very encouraging. I want to give confidence to victims to carry on reporting abuse so that we can focus on looking after them and putting the abuser behind bars."

The plan now in place to improve the service includes:

1. Bedfordshire Police have acknowledged and accepted the feedback that has been provided by the HMIC throughout the inspection process and responded positively to the key recommendations and findings by implementing a detailed action plan starting with immediate structural and procedural changes to improve processes and increase the capability and capacity of the force..
2. Increased strategic accountability via the Bedfordshire Criminal Justice Board (chaired by Chief Constable Paul). A force wide partnership Domestic Abuse sub group will scrutinise the performance, outcomes and victim care of all agencies. CC Paul has also engaged with Women's Aid who has offered to help in medium and standard risk cases.
3. Completed a full review of our victim pathway from beginning to end, ensuring a victim focused approach.
4. Improving the quality, consistency and frequency of the risk assessment process.
5. Created a High Risk Domestic Abuse Team to increase capacity and deliver an enhanced service to victims whilst maintaining a focus on the highest risk offenders.
6. Implemented a bespoke domestic abuse safeguarding tactical toolkit for front line officers. It provides a minimum set of standards for officers when responding to and managing domestic abuse incidents.
7. Looked at best practice and national expertise to provide support and specialist knowledge to the force to act as a critical friend to ensure continued improvement.

Ends