



**Cambridgeshire  
Police & Crime  
Commissioner**

**To:** Business Co-ordination Board

**From:** Chief Constable

**Date:** 25 March 2014

## **RECORDING AND RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT**

### **1. Purpose**

1.1 The paper is intended to provide an update on the Force response to allegations of rape, specifically in response to a degree of concern expressed to the service nationally by Mr Norman Baker, Minister of State for Crime Prevention and Rt Hon Damian Green, MP, Minister of State for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims, in a letter to all Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners dated 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014.

### **2. Background**

2.1 In the letter, the Home Office identify that the recent publication of rape data highlights a wide variation in recording rates, detection rates and no crimes, across Forces.

2.2 A number of proposals are made within the letter directed at both Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners, including promoting a culture of belief across Forces, every allegation of rape being recorded as a crime at the point it is recorded and for Forces to conduct thorough and professional investigations which are focussed on the needs of the victim.

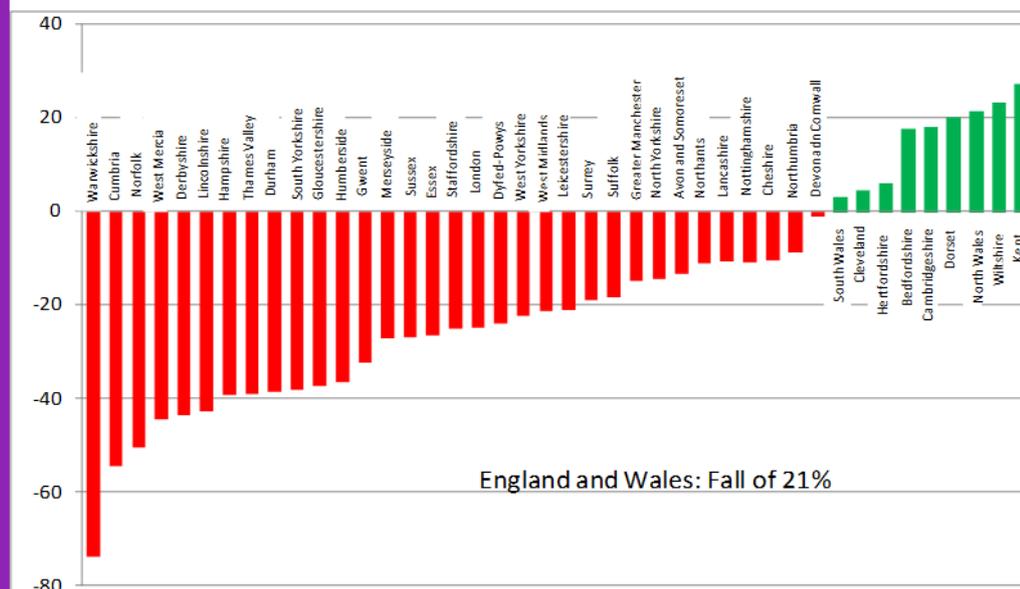
2.3 This paper responds to the above points using the recently published data to provide an update on the Constabulary's response to rape.

**3. Response to Sexual Assault**

- 3.1 Research indicates that only 20% of those who have been raped report the matter to the police. The Constabulary recognises the under reporting of rape as an issue and works proactively with partners to bring offenders to justice and reassure victims that we respond effectively and professionally to all allegations of rape.
- 3.2 The recent Old Bailey trial for a number of men accused of rape of young people within an exploitative environment (Operation Erle) demonstrates the proactive approach to serious sexual offending and the associated media management to support this key message.
- 3.3 The Constabulary has a specialist rape investigation unit operating from two locations at Cambridge and Peterborough, these being closest to the major custody estate and population concentrations. The unit is under the command of a Detective Inspector and is part of the Public Protection Department (PPD). Each team consists of a Detective Sergeant, five Detective Constables and four specially trained victim officers (STO's).
- 3.4 The unit deals with all offences of rape that are not within an interfamilial setting and work closely with colleagues in the Child Abuse Investigations Unit and Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit. The unit responds to historical rape allegations, often going back many years and will deal with rape allegations against children. It is supported by the Tri Force Major Crime Unit who have a remit to investigate stranger rape allegations which are offences when the suspect is not known to the victim.
- 3.5 The Force is a key partner within the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) based at Peterborough. The SARC provides an opportunity for victims to provide forensic evidence and speak to support services without the need to report to Police. This sends a very powerful message to victims that the Police and partners take a victim focused approach to rape allegations, recognising that the decision to involve Police can be hugely traumatic for victims. Experience has demonstrated that with the right support, many victims are able to report the matter to Police and the early recovery of forensic evidence increases the likelihood of securing a conviction.
- 3.6 The Force promotes a 'culture of belief' which is evidenced through the no crime rate for rape offences which is in the region of 5% when compared to a national average of 9.6% in 2012/13.
- 3.7 The deployment of specialist detective officers to investigate rape coupled with specialist victim care officers (STO's) ensures that victims within Cambridgeshire receive a consistent and sympathetic approach.
- 3.8 A key part of delivering a victim focussed response is to ensure that victims are not required to repeat their experiences to a range of officers and staff. The question set used by operators in the control room and police service centre is designed to identify an offence as early as possible but avoid the need for repeated questioning. The police response is influenced by balancing the needs of the victim and when they want to be seen with the need for the recovery of forensic evidence.

- 3.9 Where a victim is available to be seen immediately then an officer will attend, complete a brief summary using a standard template and raise a crime report. This response is based on 'golden hour' principles of securing best evidence.
- 3.10 This will involve identifying what safeguarding/support is required, gaining an understanding of the allegation and securing and preserving evidence, which may include the early arrest of a suspect. There is always an experienced PPD officer on duty 24/7 able to complete a forensic medical and the victim will be offered this at the earliest opportunity. The Force also has an experienced detective of not less than Detective Inspector rank on duty 24/7 who oversees all rape allegations until such time as a specialist unit takes responsibility for the investigation.
- 3.11 The victim is offered a meeting with a specialist from the Rape Investigation Team (RIT) team within 72 hours. This response not only takes account of the effects of trauma on short memory but is a victim focused response, progressing at the pace of the victim. Compliance with National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) is important for the Force and NCRS compliance officers work closely with specialist teams to ensure that accurate, professional and ethical recording takes place.
- 3.12 Data from the CPS indicates a national fall of 21% in the referral of rape cases to CPS by police. As indicated by the graph below, Cambridgeshire is one of only nine Forces that have actually increased the number of referrals to the CPS.

## % Changes in Referrals for Rape between 2011/12 and 2012/13



- Significant variation in percentage change in referrals for rape in last year (though important to note some percentage falls are based on relatively small numbers)

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### 4. Performance Analysis

- 4.1 The number of reported rapes has increased three fold in January 2014 with 13 additional crimes noted. Although demand in the 12 months to January remains slightly higher when compared to the same period in the previous year (153 crimes vs 148), detection performance is improved and comparable to December 2013 (24.8% v 19.6%).
- 4.2 Most recent HMIC data to April 2013 demonstrates that Cambridgeshire had the second highest detection rate of all Forces nationally, second only to Durham.

### 5. Victim considerations

- 5.1 The constabulary is able to demonstrate a consistent response to victims of rape through the provision of STO's and close liaison between the Force and other support agencies such as rape crisis, coupled with a strong commitment to the SARC.
- 5.2 This is reflected in the performance outlined above. Rape prosecutions rely significantly on the cooperation of the victim throughout sometimes lengthy criminal justice processes, and only an effective victim care process leads to successful criminal justice outcomes.
- 5.3 The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) manages rape prosecutions through specialist lawyers operating from a regional team. This ensures a consistent approach to rape

prosecutions and allows rape investigators and rape prosecutors to establish strong working relationships.

- 5.4 A member of the PPD senior management team attends the quarterly Violence against Women and Children CPS review group. This group critically analyses any cases that have not been successful at court and specifically considers the quality of the associated victim care, making recommendations as required.

**6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 The Constabulary is an active member of the quarterly police regional rape liaison meeting where best practice is shared and common themes explored. That group, alongside the PPD senior management team, will consider the appropriate response to the forthcoming Home Office Strategic Action Plan for rape.
- 6.2 The Force is also preparing for a HMIC child protection inspection which is anticipated may go ahead this year. This will include child rape offences and ensure that the Force response is fit for purpose.
- 6.3 The structures, partnership arrangements and processes in place within the Constabulary for responding to rape have contributed to the positive assessment and comparison within the rape data.
- 6.4 The constabulary is not however complacent and will ensure that performance is maintained and victims in Cambridgeshire continue to receive a consistent, professional response that meets their needs while bringing offenders to justice.
- 6.5 We will continue to review and assess our response to all allegations of rape and will adopt the national strategic action plan, once published.

**7. Recommendation**

- 7.1 It is recommended that the Board notes the report.