



20 April 2022

POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER RESPONSE TO THE HMICFRS JOINT INSPECTION REPORT: 'A JOINT THEMATIC INSPECTION REPORT OF THE POLICE AND CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE RESPONSE TO RAPE – PHASE 2: POST-CHARGE'

In many ways this report, and the phase 1 report released last year, makes for difficult reading. It is clear that more needs to be done to ensure that rape victims receive the service and justice they deserve from the criminal justice system, but that there are still many challenges to making this a reality.

The report's national data regarding rapes reported and leading to successful prosecutions presents a seriously disappointing picture, and I'm sure that victims and the public in general will feel this is not good enough. I support the recommendations in the report, for the police service and for our criminal justice partners. The report makes clear that all have a part to play in improving the attrition rates for rape victims in the criminal justice system and for ensuring that victims are supported throughout the process.

I note that in both reports there are issues with communication between partners and with victims, problems with victim care, and issues with data as well as officer workloads. I will ensure that these issues are overseen within South Wales Police and that I ask for updates on progress via my scrutiny programme.

I note that the first recommendation in the report relates to the police and prosecutors reviewing and improving communication with victims. This is from the point of charge onwards, and needs to include reviewing processes in conjunction with commissioned and non-commissioned services. As the commissioner of victim care service in the force area, I will be keen to ensure that this recommendation is followed through and that the victim voice is considered via our commissioned service providers.

I recognise that the first phase of this inspection emphasised the need to improve communication with victims when no further action is taken, and this is something I have already raised with my force via my scrutiny reviews relating to vulnerable

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victims of crime. I will continue to hold the force to account on this issue and to seek victim feedback on progress.

I also note, and support, this report's references to the importance of the Victim Impact Statement and to the need to improve collaborative working to ensure 'bad character' is considered in all rape cases.

I see it as an opportunity that South Wales Police is a pilot force for Operation Soteria and I hope this will provide positive outcomes for victims in our force area, with lessons that can be shared more widely.

The Chief Constable is committed to working towards positive change in terms of the service to rape victims and has provided his comments on the report as follows:

'The force is absolutely committed to radically and swiftly improving the experience of victims and survivors in Wales. South Wales Police acknowledges the findings of the report and will continue to work with other agencies with relentless focus to help ensure that our communities have a criminal justice system that understands trauma, comprehensively supports victims and survivors, and gives them a voice. The scrutiny and recommendations within this report are welcome and will enhance our plans to understand where and how we can make improvements.'

South Wales is in a privileged position of being a pilot force for Operation Soteria, a transformational approach to investigating rape, placing more focus onto perpetrators of this heinous crime. We will be sharing the learning from this with other Welsh forces to help facilitate improvement across all of Wales. The force does recognise the need to adapt to new challenges and will ensure that the recommendations are worked upon vigorously and used to develop our approach. The force remains entirely dedicated to providing a quality police service and a high standard of care for all those who live in, work in, or visit South Wales and will continue to focus on protecting and supporting victims, working tirelessly to instil confidence.

I am committed to overseeing the progress South Wales Police will make in this area, and I'm grateful for the findings in this report that show that this is an issue for the whole criminal justice system, not just for policing.

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Mae'r Comisiynydd a'i dîm yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg
The Commissioner and his team welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English