

SCRUTINISING PERFORMANCE

PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE

Background

In 2009, the Authority introduced an improved governance structure with one of its specific aims to enhance oversight of Protective Services. At its first meeting in September 2009, the Protective Services Scrutiny Committee (PSSC) highlighted concerns re Sussex Police performance relating to the policing of domestic abuse as the domestic abuse detection rate indicated deterioration and 'not on target' (see agenda for October 2009 meeting). The Lead Member for protecting Vulnerable People (PVP), whose portfolio includes domestic abuse, raised the concern that the current measurement of recording repeat incidents was crude and did not reflect the complicated nature of the problem.

The Authority adding value

Whilst members accepted that several initiatives over the past 12 months had been put in place to specifically improve detection performance such as *Operation Cranberry, the Committee requested a further report to explore the dilemmas and conflicting policies in relation to the policing of domestic abuse to better understand how to measure strong performance in this difficult area of policing.

The PSSC received a crucial report 'Domestic Abuse – Performance Discussion Document' at its meeting on 10 November 2009. The full and open discussion (which is available to view via webcast at www.sussexpolice.ukcouncil.net) exposed how approaches to tackling domestic abuse had significantly changed over the last three years with a new focus on risk reduction for all agencies involved. Additionally, the Committee heard how research has afforded a greater insight into the entrenched and often hidden nature of domestic abuse (the last British Crime Survey suggested that as little as 19% of domestic abuse is ever reported).

Outcome

Members concluded that the measures in the Local Policing Plan (LPP) 2009 -10, which judges Sussex Police regarding its performance relating to domestic abuse, were too narrow and have not developed to reflect the changed way with which a multi-agency approach has become embedded. Members recommended that the LPP 2010-13 should have more meaningful targets with the victims of domestic abuse at the centre of the considerations, and strongly supported the Chief Constables proposal to continue a positive arrest policy in relation to pursuing the perpetrators of domestic abuse.

As a direct result of the Authority's attention on this important area of policing, the way that the policing of domestic abuse is measured will fundamentally change in the [LPP 2010-11](#).

Victims are now at the forefront of our considerations. The nature of domestic abuse often means the victim is vulnerable and isolated. Agencies have a responsibility to step in and protect them, without relying on their immediate support. It is therefore appropriate that the burden of responsibility as to whether the offender should be detained should be removed from the victim and that the police continue to consistently make an arrest where power to do so exists.

* Operation Cranberry – Over the Christmas period dedicated resources were assigned to attendance at, and investigation of, domestic abuse incidents. Body worn CCTV (head cams) were demonstrated successfully to improve detection performance).

Links to related documents:

[Domestic Abuse Performance Discussion Document](#)

Contacts:

Dr Roma Walker, Lead Member for Protecting Vulnerable People
E-mail: roma.walker@sussexpa.gov.uk
Tel: 01273 208970

DCI Neville Kemp, Specialist Investigation Branch
E-mail: neville.kemp@sussex.pnn.police.uk
Tel: 07788 567889