

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London

Our ref:TP/VS

6 August 2021

Dear Home Secretary

RE: HMICFRS report: Interim Inspection into how effectively police engage with women and girls

Thank you for the report on how effectively the police engage with women and girls. The recommendations mainly impact consistency of national policing approaches but clearly these will impact on police forces. Suffolk Constabulary has provided a response to these recommendations, detailing the approach in Suffolk, which is attached.

Preventing and tackling violence against women and girls remains a priority for my office, and for the Suffolk Constabulary. It is reflected in my Police and Crime Plan.

The inspection report proposes that all police forces should ensure *information on protected characteristics of victims is accurately and consistently recorded*. This is an important challenge for policing, and Suffolk Constabulary is working with other force colleagues to consider improvements to its crime recording processes to meet this requirement.

I will keep these matters under review as part of my accountability arrangements.

Yours sincerely



Tim Passmore, Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk



Subject	Briefing Report – HMICFRS Interim Inspection into how effectively the police engage with women and girls (7th July 2021 publication)
Date	02/08/21
PURPOSE	Briefing Note - OPCC
PREPARED BY	T/DCS Andy smith
COMMISSIONED BY	As above

INTRODUCTION

This briefing note is written in response to the below report released 7th July 2021.

HMICFRS Briefing Report – HMICFRS Interim Inspection into how effectively the police engage with women and girls

In March 2021, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to inspect the effectiveness of police engagement with women and girls. A final report is scheduled to be published in September 2021.

This interim report sets out findings and recommendations from one part of this inspection, which focuses on how effectively the police respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG) offences.

The report highlights that VAWG offences are violent and high harm crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls, such as domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking and female genital mutilation.

The interim report is published now to firstly inform the governments updated VAWG and domestic abuse strategies and secondly to highlight the need for there to be cross-system action to respond with greater pace and urgency to what is regarded as an epidemic of offending against women and girls.

The report recognises that the police service have made vast improvements over the past ten years in how they respond to and investigate VAWG crimes and that the police should continue to maintain this momentum and build on these improvements, however the report calls for significant system-wide reform to the response to VAWG offences.

Three recommendations are made which are almost entirely national level requirements requiring further action by The Home Office, government departments, NPCC and College of Policing.

Recommendation 1 – there should be an immediate and unequivocal commitment that the response to VAWG offences is an absolute priority for government, policing, the criminal justice system and public sector partnerships. This needs to be supported at a minimum by a relentless focus on these crimes, mandated responsibilities and sufficient funding so that all partner agencies can work

effectively as part of whole-system approach to reduce and prevent the harms these offences are causing.

Comment: These are national level requirements relevant to the Home Office and NPCC. However, it is important to highlight that Suffolk Constabulary already prioritises domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences which form a significant proportion of high harm VAWG offences. Separate briefing reports have been provided in response to recent inspections and recommendations for these areas of policing. It should also be noted that Suffolk constabulary's 3-year plan for 2020-2023 has a renewed focus on preventing harm which is in keeping with the overarching recommendation of this report.

Recommendation 2: The relentless pursuit and disruption of adult perpetrators should be a national priority for the police, and their capability and capacity to do this should be enhanced.

Comment: This is a national level requirement relevant to the Home Office, NPCC and criminal justice partners. However, in support of this recommendation I would observe that Suffolk Constabulary's processes for managing suspects and wanted persons has been significantly improved, particularly over the past three years, receiving positive commentary from HMICFRS as part of previous local PEEL inspections. This includes operating principles for progressing the timely processing of identifiable suspects, positive action in domestic abuse cases, and detailed tracking and auditing of crimes with identifiable suspects to ensure compliance with force policy. The constabulary is well placed in this regard and fully supports that which is proposed.

Recommendation 3: Structures and funding should be put in place to make sure victims receive tailored and consistent support.

Comment: Whilst again this recommendation largely relates to governmental and ministry level responsibilities, the ethos is fully supported. There are already local structures and support to victims, including funding provided by OPCC to third party charitable foundations enhancing victim support services, but additional centralised funding would undoubtedly assist in this regard.

Of note, this recommendation also stipulates that ***'all police forces should ensure information recorded on protected characteristics of victims is accurately and consistently recorded'***.

This particular recommendation also features as part of the recent thematic inspection of the police and CPS response to rape also published in July 2021.

It is accepted that further improvements need to be made to ensure consistently detailed completion of protected characteristics is made from a crime recording perspective. Process requirements will be raised at the Athena national user group to identify and progress system-based improvements. It will also be raised as an action as part of the joint force victim subgroup. Progress will be recorded on relevant delivery plans.

Andy Smith

T/Detective Chief Superintendent