

RESPONSE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER OF DEVON, CORNWALL AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY TO THE JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION OF THE MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE FAMILY IN CORNWALL

This review looked into the effectiveness of partnership working and of individual agencies in Cornwall in response to cases of sexual abuse in the family. The review was undertaken in October 2018 by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), HMICFRS and HMI Probation.

A letter containing the findings of the inspection was issued to the PCC and Chief Constable on 23 November 2018. <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50040004>

The report requires the Director of Children's Services for Cornwall to send a written statement of action to Ofsted by 6 March 2019.

The report does not provide an overall grading but lists a number of strengths and areas for improvement.

Chief Constable's comments

The Chief Constable welcomes multi-agency inspection of whole system activity to protect the most vulnerable, and in this case focus on sexual abuse within the family in Cornwall. This reflects how policing works alongside other agencies to deliver complex services and share information to reduce risk. We are working closely with our partners to take the learning from this review and to act upon the recommendations. Those directed specifically at the police align closely with work underway and following from HMICFRS findings around investigations through their 2017 PEEL inspection. We the police are closely involved with our partners in setting and delivering action to the timescale determined following a JTAI inspection as follows.

JTAI requires the following; the local authority should prepare a written statement of proposed action responding to the findings outlined in this letter.

The response should set out the actions for the partnership and, where appropriate, individual agencies

The director of children's services should send the written statement of action to ProtectionOfChildren@ofsted.gov.uk by 6 March 2019, 70 working days from pre-

publication. This statement will inform the lines of enquiry at any future joint or single agency activity by the inspectorates.

Police & Crime Commissioner's comments

Sexual abuse is an area of national concern. It is a very complex matter which requires a joined up approach from different agencies to keep people safe. That is why I place great importance on Joint Targeted Area Inspections as they take a broader view of the performance of a range of services working together rather than in isolation.

This inspection acknowledges the strong culture and commitment to partnership-working in Cornwall and the recognition of the improving practice and services for children at risk of abuse is particularly welcome.

I do however recognise that this is work in progress and my office will continue to monitor progress in tackling the areas for improvement identified within the report through our membership on the various partnership boards who each hold a vested interest in securing these improvements for the benefit of children who may be at risk of child sexual abuse.

The OPCC continues to work closely with NHS England co-commissioning services to address sexual violence, as a result NHS E awarded a new contract for Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC's) which includes the provision of a Centre of Excellence to specifically address the needs of children and young people affected by sexual abuse.

North Devon Healthcare NHS Trust have been commissioned to deliver the service which includes the direct employment of forensically trained paediatricians who provide a medical examination service 7 days a week as well as a 24/7 helpline to professionals who might be dealing with child sexual abuse cases, ensuring the needs of the child as well as any investigation are fully met.

To compliment this service the OPCC has commissioned First Light to deliver a peninsula wide Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service, which includes the provision of specially trained children and young person's ISVA's to support both the young person and their family/carers.

The ISVA Service offers ongoing practical and emotional support and is distinct from counselling or crisis work. Each ISVA will support Service Users progressing through the criminal justice process as well as those who have decided not to report, or who are no longer in the criminal justice process.

This is an area where the interventions by the police, and other agencies, are not always apparent given the very sensitive nature of the issues. For this reason, it is

difficult to demonstrate to the public the amount and complexity of the work that goes into preventing abuse in the family.

My office has commissioned a review into the treatment of victims of serious sexual violence within the criminal justice system. The final report is scheduled to be published in January 2019, upon which my office will consider the findings of this together with the JTAI report to further scrutinise the performance of Devon & Cornwall Police, to ensure all victims are both safeguarded and supported should they choose to report to the police.

If victims of sexual abuse are reluctant to report to the police, they may still contact the Devon and Cornwall Victim Care Unit for support or assistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Hernandez', with a stylized, overlapping initial 'A'.

Alison Hernandez
Police and Crime Commissioner
Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly