



**Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) response to inspections of Norfolk Constabulary published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

*Section 55 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days*

Inspection Title:	The Police Response to Domestic Abuse: An update report
Date Published:	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Type of Inspection:	Thematic Inspection

**KEY FINDINGS:**

[This report](#) is the fourth in a series of thematic reports from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) which consider the response the police service provides to victims of domestic abuse. In March 2014, HMICFRS published their first report in this series ("[Everyone's Business: Improving the Police Response to Domestic Abuse](#)"). Since that time, the service the police give to victims of domestic abuse has improved markedly. Victims are now better supported and better protected. Unlike in HMICFRS's previous reports, they don't make national recommendations to forces, but they do comment on progress made since their previous reports.

HMICFRS's fourth report on the police response to domestic abuse found continued improvement in how the police identify, respond to and support victims of domestic abuse. The report recognises the good work being carried out by the majority of police forces including:

- continued investment in training for their workforce on domestic abuse;
- developing multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASHs) to work in partnership with other organisations to better protect victims of domestic abuse;
- the increased use of body worn video to capture evidence at the scene of an incident and;
- the increased roll-out of Operation Encompass or similar schemes, which involve the police and schools working together to support children present at domestic abuse incidents

These improvements are all the more impressive, given the increases seen in recorded levels of domestic abuse. It is important to acknowledge the pressure that the significant increases in demand is placing on forces.

Data collected during the 2017 PEEL inspection shows that recorded levels of domestic abuse rose by almost 90 percent since HMICFRS's first inspection in 2014. This is likely to represent improved recording of crimes and increased confidence in the police with more victims coming forward. But some police forces are unable to explain the reasons for the rise.

The report outlines a number of concerns around the use of bail. The number of people being released on all types of bail for domestic abuse crimes has fallen by 65 percent. Additionally, 16 forces were unable to supply comparable year-on-year data on their use of bail for domestic abuse cases. This suggests that they may not be monitoring the use of bail. HMICFRS is undertaking further work to understand how bail is being used in domestic abuse crimes.



## CHIEF CONSTABLE RESPONSE TO REPORT AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS:

Domestic Abuse remains a key priority for policing and Norfolk Constabulary continues to place strategic and operational emphasis on providing high standards of public service in this high demand, high harm aspect of societal behaviour and criminality. The current level of reported domestic abuse is unprecedented.

In response to the College of Policing 2015 Authorised Professional Practice on Domestic Abuse, a force wide Task and Finish Group was formed in 2016. Representatives from each command were involved and reviewed Norfolk's processes around domestic abuse against the recommendations and updated these to represent best practise. Ongoing governance of Norfolk Constabulary's response to Domestic Abuse is provided by the Force Public Protection Meeting, which is chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable. This covers a range of areas, including: the initial response provided; improving officer and staff awareness; improving the quality of investigations; utilising the prevention schemes (such as Clare's Law); and ensuring ongoing work is developed with other agencies and stakeholders.

It should be noted that Norfolk is not specifically mentioned in the HMICFRS findings as they are collective findings from across England and Wales. With that in mind care should be taken when drawing direct conclusions from the HMICFRS views as policing approaches to domestic abuse vary across the country. The only specific recommendation stated in the original HMICFRS report that is relevant to the Constabulary is the following:

*By April 2018, every police force in England and Wales should update its domestic abuse action plan, what more it can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in the initial report (2014) and publish its revised action plan accordingly.*

The Norfolk domestic abuse plan is well developed and the majority of areas have been delivered against. A public facing version of the action plan has been published on our website.

The initial HMICFRS 2014 report regarding domestic abuse services in policing in England and Wales provided an opportunity for forces to recognise their own performance in this area and reflect on national best practice to make improvements where it was required. In Norfolk Constabulary this work was given suitable priority and was provided high levels of governance and direction through recorded action plans.

It is essential that momentum in this area is maintained as the harm caused by domestic abuse is well evidenced nationally and within Norfolk. The Constabulary will continue to lead the partnership landscape providing commitment, data and resources at every opportunity in the best interests of victims and others who are affected by domestic abuse. It is clear that the more efforts are placed in wider public sector partnerships to tackle these issues the greater the impact that can be achieved and the plans that have been outlined in this report are testament to the local desire to achieve continuous improvement in this area of public service.



**PCC RESPONSE TO REPORT AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Norfolk PCC, Lorne Green, said: "I welcome this updated report and I am pleased to read that the police response to victims of domestic abuse continues to improve across a number of areas, including the use of body worn video to capture evidence at the scene of an incident to assist the prosecution of perpetrators of this despicable crime. This is positive news given the dramatic increases in recorded levels of domestic abuse. I am also pleased to see the Norfolk Domestic Abuse Task and Finish Group, which was established to help improve arrest rates and increase the number of case files going to the CPS, was highlighted in the report.

"As Norfolk's PCC I continue to pledge to do everything within my means to prevent such abuse and ensure that help and support is available to those who need it. I will be seeking reassurance on behalf of the people of Norfolk that any key findings contained in this report are considered and implemented where appropriate.

"Supporting victims and reducing vulnerability is one of the seven strategic aims in our Police and Crime Plan for the county and I commission and fund a number of domestic abuse support services in the county, including the Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy Service, the Pandora Project, Norwich Connect and The Daisy Programme.

"I am confident Norfolk Constabulary will give this report careful consideration and will take any learning on board to improve the local police response to domestic abuse. For my part, as Victims' Commissioner, I pledge to continue to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure that domestic abuse is treated as a priority by Norfolk Constabulary.

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- ✓ Response forwarded to Chief Constable
- ✓ Response forwarded to Police and Crime Panel