



VERA BAIRD^{QC}
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

**Northumbria Police & Crime Panel
Report
June 2019**

Dear Panel Member,

As you are probably aware, this will be my final Police and Crime Panel meeting. It has been a privilege and an honour to serve the communities of Tyne and Wear and Northumbria. When I was first elected in 2012, I promised that neighbourhood policing would be maintained - this pledge has been kept every year. I'm proud that despite all the challenges, I have been able to protect the number one policing priority of local communities.

Since PCCs were given the local responsibility for victims services which we took on in 2015, Victims First Northumbria, our hub, has been developed and has now emerged as a strong force for victims, supporting them to cope and recover and latterly focussing on a seamless service from report to court for the most vulnerable victims. Victim satisfaction is at a high level both with VFN and with Northumbria Police as the two organisations work closely together on easing the victim journey.

You will see that my report for panel is slightly different to previous ones and focuses on a number of achievements since 2012.

The residents of Northumbria Police force deserve the very best policing and our officers and police staff strive to deliver that and I thank them for all they continue to do. During my tenure as Police and Crime Commissioner, I have worked closely with three Chief Constables most recently with Chief Constable Winton Keenen - he continues to be as passionate about Northumbria Police today as he was when he joined the force over thirty years ago. I know the new Police and Crime Commissioner will build quickly a positive relationship with the Chief Constable to ensure the effective delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.

I would also like to pay tribute to panel members past and present. Northumbria's Police and Crime Panel is recognised nationally as being one that works in partnership to deliver their statutory duties. Your friendship and advice has always been welcomed and under the leadership of Cllr Angela Douglas, I know the new Commissioner will soon develop an effective partnership with you and the staff of Gateshead council who so effectively service the panel. Thank you to you all.

Finally, I would like to thank my brilliant staff - many who have been with me since day one. I will miss each and every one of them. They are a unique team, with talent that can deal with any situation or request. The new Commissioner is lucky to inherit such a group of first class people

Best wishes,

Vera

1. Domestic and Sexual Abuse

Domestic Violence Support and Assistance (DVSA) Car

The DVSA car project is structured around the provision of dedicated response units, consisting of a police officer and a DVSA support worker, being made available for deployment in an unmarked police vehicle in response to 999 calls about Domestic Abuse (DA).

I wanted to build on the success of DVSA car projects operating in the Newcastle and Sunderland areas of Northumbria. In December 2016, the DVSA Car was introduced in to the areas of Gateshead, North Tyneside, Northumberland and South Tyneside. This was initially for a four month period from December – March 2017 covering both Friday and Saturday evenings during the hours of 6pm to 2am. In the four month pilot period, the car supported 209 victims of domestic abuse – helping victims at the very moment they have found the confidence to reach out for help.

The DVSA cars success has continued, with 1697 victims of domestic abuse receiving specialist support to at the point of crisis during 2018-19 with many of those victims, who may not have done so in the past, engaging with specialist support services. I'm proud of this scheme - for strengthening support for victims of DA at a time when they need it most and the benefits such as key learning for the police and partnership working that is unusually close and mutually supportive.

Court Observers 'Seeing is Believing'

PCCs have responsibility for the provision of support services for victims of crime for victims in accordance with the Victims Code of Practice. It came to my attention that in Northumbria, too many victims of crime were impacted negatively if they chose to engage with the criminal justice process and in particular, through involvement with a criminal trial.

Rape cases are an area where Victims First Northumbria, our care hub, found a high level of concern. In response to this, we recruited volunteers, trained them in court process and 'rape myths' often used in court and asked them to observe adult rape trials taking place in Newcastle Crown Court. With a matrix of questions to guide the observations, the panel members worked in pairs, on a rota basis observing proceedings from the public gallery. In total the panel observed 30 trials, almost all the adult rape trials heard within the project period.

I then spent time analysing the findings, along with experts, and drew up a series of recommendations which were compiled into a report and shared with the Crown Prosecution Service, the Judiciary, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service and Northumbria Police. It outlined key areas in need of change to improve the experience rape victims have when they become involved within the CJS. The findings of the report were reported on nationally, and the report is regularly cited by

those championing for the system to change and who wish to improve the experience of victims in the Criminal Justice System (CJS).

Domestic Abuse Health Advocates

We identified that domestic abuse costs the health service an estimated £1.73 billion, with an additional cost of £11.76 million for mental health services.

DA Victims accessing health services are more likely to have complex needs, such as mental health and substance misuse issues, particularly anxiety, PTSD and suicidal ideation. Domestic homicide reviews and serious adult reviews regularly identify missed opportunities by health staff to spot the signs of abuse, ask about it and act.

With this in mind, we decided to roll out a DA Health Advocates Scheme throughout Northumbria. Working with the six Local Authorities and Health Commissioners I funded a project that aims to improve the response that victims of domestic abuse get when accessing health services. It aims to do this by better identifying, responding to and helping prevent further abuse through earlier intervention, support, and referring patients to the right specialist health services and other wrap-around support services such as substance misuse and mental health (e.g. provision of treatment).

For health care staff, with projects in hospitals and GPs surgeries, this has helped improve awareness of domestic abuse and instilled confidence and ability to respond. It has also enabled staff to improve their knowledge and use of relevant referral pathways in response to domestic abuse.

The scheme has seen many benefits for patients who are also victims of domestic abuse too. Ultimately it has made them more aware of the support available to them, which in turn has improved their sense of personal safety and their quality of life.

Cyber Stalking Project

Cyber stalking is the persistent use of the internet, e-mail, social networks, instant messaging or related digital devices to annoy, harass or threaten. It is growing rapidly and is also exhibiting a degree of diversity, with the abuse experienced by a victim being limited only by the imagination and cyber-skills of their abuser. Capturing the nature of such offending is not easy, particularly for police services more used to policing individual incidents than evidencing patterns of persistent offending.

In 2017 I bid for Home Office funding to create a specialist team within Northumbria Police to investigate cases of cyber-based stalking and harassment for victims of DA. As part of the team an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) has been seconded from a specialist services provider.

Early indications are that this team, by listening to victims and joining the dots between individual incidents, can more successfully investigate these serious 'course of conduct' offences. The addition of the IDVA to the team has reduced

victim attrition with an excellent victim engagement rate of 85%. A full evaluation will take place but early evidence of 50 investigations up to February 2019 show that of the 34 completed there have been:

- 17 Convictions (50%)
- 17 Restraining Orders (50%)
- With others still awaiting trial/sentencing
- Just 5 out of 50 (10%) being NFA'd for evidential reasons/due to victims fears

Additional funding accessed from the Home Office provided training for partner agencies and the team have also compiled a 'Cyber Stalking Toolkit', which offers practical advice to complainants and victims of cyber-related domestic abuse crimes, and helps them to identify and deactivate spyware, secure their social media accounts and review all their media outlets alongside a trained officer. The team was also made responsible for setting Digital Media Investigation (DMI) strategies, reviewing digital device downloads and attending suspect interviews for extra support for front line officers.

As technology evolves so do these types of crime so it was very important to me that Northumbria was leading the way in evolving its responses to emerging digital threats.

Sexual Violence Complainant Advocates

The Sexual Violence Complainants' Advocates (SVCA) pilot was established to offer complainants of rape independent legal representation in discrete areas of the criminal justice system. Funded by the Home Office VAWG Transformation Fund for 3 years (2017-2020), work began in September 2018, following extensive research and scoping with key partners, particularly Northumbria Police and CPS North East.

The project was born out of my concerns around the handling of digital and third party material about the complainant in sexual offence cases, as compared to all other types of criminal case.

There has been national attention around the disclosure of rape complainants' material particularly in relation to mobile phone downloads. The concept of independent legal representation for complainants is completely new to the English jurisdiction, though not to similar jurisdictions such as Ireland and Canada. As such, the Northumbria project was intended as a local pilot for a national scheme, to assist complainants to assert their rights around the disclosure of their personal information, and redress the current imbalance between complainants and defendants.

The Northumbria SVCAs, all qualified lawyers, are supporting rape complainants in and around giving ABE (achieving best evidence) interviews/written statements to the police, but predominantly advocacy is provided around disclosure of third party and digital download material SVCAs assist complainants to understand what their consent to disclosure means, work with the police to ensure only relevant third party material is requested, and if necessary make representations on behalf of complainants to the CPS and the court where arguably excessive material is

requested. To date, the SVCAs have received 58 referrals from complainants wishing to access support.

Regional VAWG Strategy

In 2014 with the PCCs from Durham and Cleveland, we created the first regional VAWG strategy with 20 priorities that clearly mapped out what steps were needed to tackle the issue. Following the successful roll out regionally, many OPCCs have adopted our priorities in order to tackle VAWG in their own areas. Many successful schemes from the strategy are outlined in this document. Moving forward and building on the relationships and joint working of the DAWSA project a seven force VAWG strategy is currently being developed.

Domestic Abuse Whole System Approach (DAWSA)

In 2017, I welcomed the news that we had secured £7m from the Home Office Police Transformation Fund to tackle domestic abuse across six north-eastern police forces, using a 'whole system approach' model, devised here in the Northumbria. The project, which was developed with specialist domestic abuse charities and agencies, has three central strands. The first focusses on boosting police training about coercive control, effective development of strong court files to aid prosecutions and close partnership working with the criminal justice system. The second strand aims to improve information sharing and victim support across the criminal, civil and family courts, to avoid cases from falling through gaps and any risk of vulnerable victims being failed by a lack of supporting resource in the non-criminal courts. The third strand covers multi-agency victim support and strong and innovative perpetrator management, ensuring significant consequences for perpetrators.

The project is now operational across the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, and a new, further-reaching regional Violence against Women and Girls Strategy wrapped around this project is underway. The project has been an excellent example of mutual learning and close collaboration both in policing and across partner agencies.

Workplace Domestic Abuse Champions

The impact of Domestic Abuse on an individual can have far reaching consequences in the workplace, such as undermining the employee's ability to work. Over the last few years, my office has played an active part in promoting a model domestic abuse policy to employers, particularly within the private sector.

In addition to this policy, we encourage organisations to have trained champions in as many employment, public and private arenas as possible so there is safe access to confidential help and support in a wide range of locations.

These champions have an important role within their organisation - raising awareness around issues of DA and signposting people to support and guidance. The champion is the point of contact within their place of employment and they are backed by a Champions Network which aims to provide up-to-date information and support to the champion.

To date, there are over 1000 trained champions supporting colleagues in over 350 areas of business. The network works very closely with Local Authority Domestic Abuse leads and continues to grow.

2. Putting Victims First

Victims First Northumbria

In 2015, I developed an independent victim referral service – Victims First Northumbria. Now an established charity, the service ensures every victim of crime is assigned their own co-ordinator, who can make sure they and their families, receive all the help they need in order to cope and recover from their experience. Victims are referred to the service by the police or they can self-refer.

In 2018/19, VFN had 25,404 referrals and has supported 18,421 victims of crime to help them on their road to recovery.

To find out more about the work of Victims First Northumbria you can visit their website at www.victimsfirstnorthumbria.org.uk

Restorative Justice (RJ)

Great progress has been made in Northumbria to improve access to restorative justice, where appropriate. In fact, Victims First Northumbria is regularly cited as a 'best practice' model through which RJ can be used as part of a victim's recovery journey – bringing together victims and offenders, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.

In addition I provided funding for Youth Offending Teams and the local Community Rehabilitation Company to enable them to achieve the Restorative Services Quality Mark (RSQM) which a number took up. In October 2016, VFN celebrated receiving the RSQM awarded by the Restorative Justice Council. The RSQM recognises that VFN provides a high quality, safe service – a real endorsement of its work.

Operation Encompass: The Next Steps

Northumbria is proud to be delivering 'Operation Encompass : The Next Steps' - a Home Office funded pilot for a proposed national rollout, which aims to build on the already successful Operation Encompass initiative which has improved communications between police and schools.

My office and Northumbria Police, in partnership with Operation Encompass and Barnardo's, have devised the project which is already underway providing training for school staff. It also aims to facilitate a drop-in/advice service within the school setting. Together, the partners are also championing for change - acknowledging that children who experience domestic abuse at home are very much the victims too

– something the collaboration wants to see reflected in Government’s Domestic Abuse Bill and across society as a whole.

Trauma Teddies

I launched the Trauma Teddies initiative in Newcastle as a joint project with Victims First Northumbria in September 2017, and it has grown ever since. Teddies are knitted and donated by members of the public to be handed out by officers to children who have been a victim or witness to an incident, as a form of comfort.

The initiative has been a huge success with hundreds of teddies being donated all across and beyond the region. The initiative recognises the effect a traumatic experience can have on a child and such a simple gesture is a step towards making a child’s experience less painful.

Victims Advisory Panel

Over the years I’ve spoken up on behalf of victims on the national Victims Advisory Panel, chaired by the Government, helping to make sure the needs and concerns of victims are listened to at the highest level and that government policy is developed to meet the needs of the victim and obviously something I will continue with in my new role.

As well as chairing the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) for a year, I was the victims lead for the association – promoting the interests of victims and ways to reduce harm. Working with the Association I have raised innumerable issues of direct importance to victims, from encouraging a better police understanding of stalking to successfully, with others, championing new legislation to tackle the invasive practice of upskirting.

Remote Evidence Suites

One way in which I sought to improve the criminal justice experience for children and vulnerable adults was the introduction of Remote Evidence Centres. These centres help those who are required to give evidence in criminal court proceedings by shielding them from as much stress of the process as possible.

Northumbria now has four facilities in undisclosed locations enabling people to give evidence via a television link without ever entering a court building. The suites were part-funded by Home Office Innovation funding and since opening the suites have been used for 190 cases for vulnerable victims and/or witnesses to give evidence, in some cases there were multiple witnesses or victims. The numbers using these centres and thus avoiding the stress of attending court and the fear of confronting their defendant is likely to increase rapidly as the benefits become better understood

Promotional Campaigns

As part of my personal mission to reach out to victims and put them at the heart of everything we do, every year I have organised a series of high profile publicity

campaigns to encourage the reporting of under-reported crimes such as female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and hate crime.

I have also lent my support to a range of campaigns ran by partners, for example the 'We Believe You' campaign, helping to raise the profile of Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland and the good work it does – encouraging victims of rape and sexual assault to reach out for support to help them cope with and recover from their experience.

3. Effective Criminal Justice System

Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB)

Following the national inspection of the work of LCJBs in 2015, it was recommended that Police and Crime Commissioner's should undertake a fundamental review of local partnership arrangements to ensure they were fit to lead change in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system at a local level.

In 2017 I was pleased to take on the role of Chair of Northumbria LCJB and together, with the help of the board we've undertaken a process of review and re-invigoration. This has resulted in a new vision for partnership working and a new operating model which is already helping to deliver a more efficient and effective criminal justice in Northumbria. A two year business plan is in place with 8 priorities to ensure strong support for victims and witnesses; fair, just and effective progression of cases; apprehension, punishment and rehabilitation of offenders; and promotion of joint work that reduces the number of people entering the criminal justice system. The LCJB members have agreed success criteria for each of the priorities and have the means to monitor and measure performance at every board meeting.

Winning Gold - Independent Custody Visitors

I am delighted to report that this year our Northumbria Independent Custody Visitors Scheme won a prestigious national award for the quality of its independent custody visiting scheme. The Office of Police and Crime Commissioner volunteers make unannounced visits to police custody to check on the rights, entitlements, well-being and dignity of detainees held in police custody, reporting their findings to myself which I in turn raise any issues with the Chief Constable.

The Quality Assurance awards were introduced by ICVA to help schemes:

- Reflect on how they comply with the Code of Practice, the legislation that underpins custody visiting.
- Celebrate areas of strength.
- Promote custody visiting and the achievements schemes have made.
- Drive performance and increase sharing of good practice

There were four graded levels of award and Northumbria secured Gold.

- Code Complaint – Scheme meets statutory requirements and necessary volunteer standards

- Silver – Scheme provides a good standard of custody visiting and volunteer management
- Gold – Scheme provides an excellent standard of custody visiting and volunteer management
- Platinum – Scheme provided an outstanding standard of custody visiting and volunteer management

Within each level, there were more than 25 set of criteria covering key areas such as holding the force to account, and requiring evidence to support each assessment. For silver and gold levels, schemes had to get their submissions peer assessed and ICVA assessed each submission for a platinum award.

This award clearly shows that here in Northumbria we strive to provide the very best care to those in custody and this award shows that we are getting it right. I would like to thank our custody visitors who are brilliant and undertake many visits, without their commitment and dedication we would not have won gold. Our next step is to secure the Platinum award.

Appropriate adults

In a bid to address a shortage of ‘appropriate adults’ in the region, I forged a partnership with Sunderland University. Students are trained under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) to provide a 24-hour volunteer service across the Northumbria force area. Appropriate adults are there to support vulnerable adults who are in custody under police investigation.

The scheme is the first of its kind in England. Volunteers provide a whole host of support, from providing explanations of the custody process to helping people to understand their rights and entitlements. They can offer assistance, advice and emotional support throughout a person’s time in police custody and in addition minimise the time vulnerable people spend in custody waiting for the provision of that support by means of their 24 hour rota system.

Out of Court Disposals (OCD)

Diversion from custody and reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of people has always been an important priority for me.

Conditional cautions, both in Northumbria and nationally, are historically underused and under developed and that’s why I secured funding for a project manager to work closely with the force and my office to provide purposeful interventions that address offending behaviour through conditional cautions.

Part of this work saw the creation of six pathways that provided tailored interventions to: veterans, women, substance misuse assessment and alcohol brief intervention, alcohol behaviour change programme, victim awareness programme, and unpaid work.

The aim of my revised Conditional Caution is to provide early intervention to low risk low level offending behaviour and increase involvement of victims in the resolution of low level crimes. Evidence assures that this can support the Cope and Recovery agenda and increase victim satisfaction. Diverting offenders from court, at the earliest opportunity through appropriate use of OOCs, can avoid unnecessary criminalisation and the negative impact this can have on the rehabilitation process.

Specialist Domestic Violence Courts, How special are they?

Following on from the success of the rape trial observations we made I embarked upon a new project 'Specialist Domestic Violence Courts, How special are they?' This was because a number of concerns had been raised about whether changes to the infrastructure around SDVCs may be making them less effective.

Volunteers from the Soroptimists were trained by the local CPS and we worked with them and with HMCTS to develop a questionnaire to promote a consistent approach to the collection of data.

Volunteer observers sat in on 223 domestic abuse case proceedings between July and November 2017, the report highlighted a number of significant gaps in service provision, most specifically around the lack of support for victims of DA in court by IDVAs and also the need to ensure that the Judiciary receive specialist training to understand the nature of coercive control and DA when sitting in the SDVC. I made 13 recommendations directed at not only the courts but all those that have a role to play in the SDVC arena. Implementation of these recommendations is currently being monitored by the LCJB Victim and Witness Sub group.

Specialist DA Court Advisor

Following the recommendations made in the report "Specialist Domestic Violence Courts – how special are they?" in which it was very clear that problem-solving courts, rolled out nationwide from 2005 onwards, had ceased to work as originally intended, I recognised that the near virtual absence of IDVAs was detrimental to the very essence of the SDVC purpose.

There were many reasons for this absence – a recent rationalisation of SDVC provision from 6 local courts to 2 area courts; an increase in cases heard in local remand courts rather than SDVCs, and some apparently intractable information sharing problems that meant local specialist services could not easily identify which victims were linked to which proceedings.

The solution, agreed with all partner agencies, was to pilot two Specialist DA Court Advisors to be based in each of the two local SDVCs and to cover SDVC and remand court hearings. I have agreed to fund these two posts for a 12 month pilot and they will be employed for 12 months by Northumbria Police and work alongside VFN and local specialist services to make contact with DA complainants, provide information to the court on their individual circumstances and support needs and ensure the complainant receives timely feedback on case outcomes. One Advisor is now in post and another is awaiting vetting.

Victims Code of Practice (VCOP)

The Victims Code of Practice is a statutory code that sets out the minimum level of service that victims should receive from the criminal justice system. The Code was established by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 and was put in place in 2006. The Code has since been revised twice with the most recent revision being in October 2015 to ensure compliance with European Union Victims Directive.

It was agreed in 2018 that PCCs would oversee a new monitoring process measuring criminal justice partners' compliance with certain of the entitlements in the Victims' Code. Although guidance has just been received from the Ministry of Justice, here in Northumbria we have been considering how we can measure compliance with VCOP and working with partners in the LCJB we have started to identify how we can do this locally. Initial compliance reports will be presented to the LCJB in September well ahead of the MOJ deadline.

The five key areas of VCOP identified as being the most important by victims themselves and those that will be monitored by the LCJB are: victim rights, progress of a victim case, offender conviction, sentence and release, referral to appropriate support organisations, and making a victim personal statement.

4. Reducing anti-social behaviour

PCSO problem solving training

As part of a force-wide drive to reduce anti-social behaviour our PCSOs have been offered specific collaborative problem solving training to help with community relations and safety. The training officers receive is predominantly workshop based and helps build on existing skills covering problem analysis, identifying partners and discussing suitable response options.

I've supported a move which will see the PCSO course re-designed in the coming months as part of a collaboration with Northumbria University. It will take the form of an apprenticeship based upon the College of Policing's learnings and objectives.

ASB publicity campaign

Reducing anti-social behaviour has been a key priority for both myself and Northumbria Police. In order to give local people the confidence to report ASB, reassure residents of action that's been taken and make those responsible aware of how seriously ASB is being, we jointly ran a publicity campaign.

A 'hyper-local' campaign was devised which involved collating strong examples of success stories and producing artwork to showcase this. Posters were then placed at high footfall sites with bespoke examples for the area. The poster captions described the behaviour that isn't being tolerated by Northumbria Police and how police and partners have responded and the successes made. Sites throughout each area command where the posters could be seen included: metro stations, supermarkets and bus stops. Supporting 'good news' stories were also supplied to

the media to coincide with the campaign. The campaign successfully highlighted examples of how Northumbria Police has listened to the concerns of local communities and the work that has been done to tackle the highlighted issues.

ASB volunteer networks across Northumbria

Since 2015 I have offered funding to the six local authorities to provide local ASB Volunteer Networks across Northumbria to provide extra support for the most vulnerable victims and an ASB task force was introduced to ensure that vulnerability is identified more quickly. Working in collaboration with the local authorities, the aim of the initiative has been to help victims of ASB to cope and recover following an incident or sustained attacks.

The scheme has been welcomed by many residents. In North Tyneside, for example, it helped improve satisfaction levels in the local tenant survey. This survey found that 100% per cent of victims felt they had been supported through the duration of their case.

Commissioner's Community Fund – ASB Focus

Every year my Commissioner's Community Fund has had a strong focus on identifying projects that can really make a difference in reducing ASB in local communities. In fact ASB projects in 2018-2019 were awarded £95,337.

The Killingworth Community Consortium in North Tyneside is an example of a project making a difference thanks to some of this funding. The organisation provides a youth club which attracts around 25 young people each week to engage with young people, helping them to develop positive skills for life. The club encourages social responsibility and helps to connect young people with their environment by encouraging team work diversion activities. Some of the funding has helped facilitate and provide a range of structured workshops and activities to deal with some difficult, thought provoking issues too, around the use of social media, violence and awareness of domestic abuse. There are examples of similar projects in all six local authorities and information about all the grants awarded under the Commissioners Community Fund are available on my website at <http://www.northumbria-pcc.gov.uk/police-crime-plan/commissioning-services-grants/>

Collaborative work with Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Fire Services

I've always believed in the importance of our emergency services working together, in partnership, for the communities that we serve. That's why, this year the blue light services in the North East formed a collaboration partnership to give new energy to that determination and boost fresh ideas for further improvement. The collaboration steering group focuses on 8 areas of business: sharing of knowledge and information, service delivery, estate and asset integration, control room, service support function, training and development, public engagement and accountability, and finance. In addition I have become a full voting member of the Tyne and Wear Fire Authority so that cross-over issues can be tackled strategically by the respective police and fire governance bodies.

We have been committed to promoting a safe and secure environment in which tenants, leaseholders, businesses, and visitors can exist peacefully. Recently my office attended a workshop with fire services and partners looking at how services can work together to reduce the impact of ASB on communities. We all recognise that the quality of life of a community can be seriously eroded by ASB and where possible we are finding collaborative approaches to tackling issues.

5. Cutting Crime

Women's Diversion Support Worker

It is an established view that women can experience additional disadvantage as a result of involvement in the criminal justice system. The likelihood of poorer outcomes for their children regarding school attendance, achievement and involvement in crime is well documented. Diversion from court, coupled with appropriate interventions to address offending, will contribute to breaking this cycle. Whilst presenting as offenders, some of these women will also be victims of crime and the CRC women's hubs that are commissioned specifically to support female offenders, and reduce reoffending are well placed to address these needs also.

As part of the OOCDD (out of court disposals) refresh a Pathway was created specifically for women to undertake a mandatory assessment of their offending related needs with an experienced practitioner in this field. The pathway seeks to engage the women in on-going work and encourage contact with a range of appropriate services which can support their rehabilitation. The on-going work will be out-with the conditional caution, i.e. will be on a voluntary basis, but encouraging on-going involvement will be a key aim of the assessment process. Once the assessment is undertaken, the conditional caution will have been successfully completed.

With money from the Home Office VAWG fund I commissioned Northumbria CRC to deliver the intervention. To date 119 referrals have been made and 101 women have complied with the condition of their caution.

Rural and wildlife crime

Here in Northumbria we have a large rural area and it's crucial that we are prepared to deal with crimes and issues that affect those communities. I have supported two strategies to help tackle rural and wildlife crime as well as a series of local initiatives such as officer training, FarmWatch Schemes and community groups.

Last year a national report by rural insurer NFU mutual showed that residents in Northumbria are at the lowest risk of rural crime in the entire country thanks to many of the schemes and initiatives in place.

I am a member of the Rural Crime Network and with other PCCs work to champion a better understanding of crime in rural areas, and new, effective ways to help to keep rural communities safe – and make them feel safer too

Safe Haven

The Safe Haven was established in Newcastle City Centre, as part of my continued focus on a safer night time economy. It provides a safe space for vulnerable people – where they are able to recover from the effects of alcohol, charge mobile phones and organise safe travel back home. The police run the facility with North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) and St John's Ambulance (SJA), who ensure people in need of medical attention are able to receive care, reducing the need to call an ambulance or attend hospital. Patients can be triaged at the Haven and those that do require hospital treatment can be identified more quickly. The service is also supported by a fantastic team of volunteers from the Street Pastors who are on hand to care for and offer assistance to people on a night out.

Newcastle has a vibrant and lively nightlife and I have been pleased to see how this partnership approach has played a valuable role in keeping people visiting the city safe.

Modern Day Slavery Conference

Over the years I've lent my voice to raising awareness of how modern day slavery is not just something that happens in other countries. It can be happening right on our doorstep here in Northumbria - in plain sight - and we all have a part to play. To help bring local partners together (Durham Constabulary, Newcastle Council, Changing Lives, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the National Crime Agency) I secured Police Transformation funding to hold a conference with local partners and businesses, to share best practice and learning from Northumbria Police with others and increase awareness and discussing our collective response.

Last year the Force's Operation Cluster successfully safeguarded victims and brought to justice seven defendants who earlier this year were collectively convicted of 34 offences.

Attended by colleagues from throughout the region the conference provided opportunity to reflect on our partnership work and identify improved ways to safeguard and support victims.

Mental Health Triage

I've always championed the work of the Street Triage team which operates in collaboration with Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (NTW). It is a service that comprises of a mental health nurse working alongside a dedicated police officer who patrol together. The initiative involves the team of professionals making an immediate assessment to make sure an individual gets the best care possible when concerns about their mental state are reported to the police – this is designed to help avoid preventable detentions when using Section 136 of the Mental Health Act and signpost them to the most appropriate service.

Last year the scheme was cited as best practice in a national report by the HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services). It was praised for its forward-thinking simulation training package

‘Respond’, which sets out clear roles and responsibilities for everyone in mental health crisis work. This demonstrates the great partnership work in Northumbria that is making a positive difference in supporting vulnerable people in difficult circumstances, despite increasing pressures.

Youth Intervention Fund – YOLO

This year, a new project designed with to help young people, who potentially might become involved in serious violent crime, has been launched. The YOLO project which stands for ‘you only live once’ has been established with Youth Offending Team partners throughout Northumbria, following a successful bid for Home Office funding, which secured more than £300,000 to support early intervention work.

The focus of the scheme will be linking 200 young people to the intervention and support that best meets their needs if they become or are on the fringe of involvement with serious violent crime. They might be supported through group work sessions provided by the charity, Street Doctors, or one to one mentoring support offered by the Newcastle United Foundation and the Foundation of Light. Funding has also been made available from this fund for the Youth Offending Teams in every LA area.

A bespoke assessment has been developed by the collaboration to assess young people’s suitability for the programme, considering a range of adverse childhood experiences which can negatively impact their lives causing them to turn to crime.

6. Community Confidence

Advisory Groups

When I came into post I set up several Advisory Groups based on the protected strands in the Equality Act 2010 which are ethnicity and belief & faith, sexuality, age, disability and gender, plus a victims group. These groups meet three times a year and have a crucial role in helping to shape my thinking on policing matters and provide feedback on government consultations, policy, police practice and a range of other important matters. The advisory groups have been actively engaged in providing valuable feedback on topics such as: the Police and Crime Plan, the workforce and recruitment process, hate crime strategy and mental health responses.

The advisory groups have helped improve satisfaction with the services that Northumbria Police provides, as has been reflected in the hate crime survey and the force’s most recent recruitment campaign aimed at encouraging members of BAME communities to consider working for the police which produced unprecedented results in the attraction and selection of BME candidates.

Vulnerability Awareness Training

Over the past seven years Northumbria Police has been regularly judged as one of the top performing forces in England and Wales when it comes to supporting vulnerable people, according to the HMIC and PEEL effectiveness inspection

programmes. The force's vulnerability awareness training has played a valuable part in achieving this.

The training was developed as a result of a partnership between my office, Northumbria Police, Safe Newcastle and Phoenix Security. Through training door staff, takeaway staff, hotel reception staff and other people in the night time economy on the safest way of helping people to get home safely, it has helped reduce potential harm to those who find themselves vulnerable and supported our thriving night-time economy. Together, partners can maximise all opportunities to safeguard individuals who, through various circumstances, become vulnerable in our cities and towns.

Due to the success of the initiative the training package has been adopted by other forces throughout the country and has become part of the Security Industry Authority training programme for door supervisors.

SafetyWorks!

SafetyWorks! is an interactive safety centre established and managed by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, working in partnership with myself, Northumbria Police, Nexus, St John's Ambulance and Sainsbury's. It provides realistic interactive learning experiences for young people and community groups, to learn about the prevention of danger and how to live safely.

Through funding from the Police Innovation Fund, I strengthened the role of SafetyWorks! the interactive safety centre offer additional programmes to educate young people about the dangers of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and how they can seek help.

The facility gained a national stamp of approval when it received official endorsement from a national CSE charity - NWG, which praised the centre for its bespoke sessions on CSE.

Community Safety Partnerships

Northumbria Police work with each of the six Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). They are local multiagency partnership established to tackle community safety issues such as crime, antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse, adolescent to parent abuse and training around DHR (domestic homicide review).

The partnerships have seen a range of successes, for example Gateshead partnership have strengthened the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub approach within Gateshead (following the recent success and evaluation). Sunderland CSP are working together to tackle the increase in violent offending with young people. Operation Asteroid has been setup and has a number of initiatives looking to tackle this issue.

Minimum Alcohol Pricing Lobbying

Forty per cent of crime is linked to alcohol. There is a real responsibility on Government to take measures to reduce alcohol consumption because doing so will make a real difference to the level of crime in our society, and to the well-being of everyone and that's why through-out my time in post I have campaigned tirelessly for a minimum price of alcohol to be implemented across ALL of the UK.

Recently I joined forces with my two other PCC colleagues, Barry Coppinger and Ron Hogg. Together we wrote to the Health Secretary, Matt Hancock MP, to make the case that the impact of alcohol on society extends beyond the harm it causes to individuals, to increased levels of crime, sub-optimum economic performance, and costs to the public purse.

We've yet to see an end to the cheap sales of high-strength drink but I will continue to raise my voice on the matter.

Complaints Triage

When I was first elected as Police and Crime Commissioner in 2012, one of the first House of Commons reports to land on my desk was one that informed me that Northumbria Police had one of the highest number of IOPC (previously IPCC) upheld complaints.

It was clear change was needed - we had to get rid of an old process that was not customer friendly, that was difficult to work through and we needed to put in place a system that put complainants at the heart of how we dealt with complaints. I wanted a simple process established, so it was easier to make a complaint. Gone are the days when people had to sit and wait to see a senior officer, too often the complaint was left in the 'to do' tray as other policing priorities took over.

In 2013 I set up the Triage Complaints system, a team of three that would be the first point of contact for all complaints - they would do their best to resolve the complaint at contact. So often, a simple sorry was all that was needed. The system has proved to be very effective, so much so that it is the model of the new complaints legislation that has been approved by Parliament. Police forces from up and down the country have been to visit Northumbria to see how the system was implemented and works. I am indebted to all the staff who have helped this process be so successful. Going forward, new legislation gives a bigger role to OPCCs in dealing with complaints, here in Northumbria we will keep the Triage system at the beginning of the process - why change something that works so well. PCCs will become responsible for low level appeals that currently sit with the Chief Constable - this is a statutory role and I have appointed the Director of Governance and Communication to undertake this role for the OPCC, he already oversees the triage daily work. I have asked that Northumbria Police start provided cases now, so they can be reviewed and any processes that need sorted are done so. I am proud that Northumbria Police has become an organisation that wants to learn and when peoples trust has fallen in the police, they have done everything possible to rebuild that trust. We have a strong team in place, committed to driving standards forward and keeping the residents that we serve at the heart of what we do.

7. Funding and resources

Supporting Victims Fund

The Supporting Victims Fund was set up to 'support victims of crime' across Northumbria. The fund was designed to build the capacity and maximise the potential of organisations to help ensure the improved provision of vital support services. The fund has awarded £8.9m to a range of organisations since 2015 to support victims of crime.

Grants were made available to individual organisations or partnerships providing support to victims of crime to help them cope and recover. Victims of crime are defined in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime as 'a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was directly caused by criminal conduct; or a close relative of a person whose death was directly caused by criminal conduct.'

Over the years, we have particularly welcomed applications that provide support to those most vulnerable in our society who under the Victims Code of Practice are entitled to enhanced support. Taking this in to consideration and what we know about our particularly vulnerable victims in Northumbria we particularly welcomed applications that helped to strengthen support in the areas of: domestic abuse, sexual assault and abuse, young people and child victims, victims of hate crime, victims with mental health needs and victims with other vulnerabilities.

Commissioner's Community Fund

Each year I've invited groups supporting their neighbourhoods and communities to apply for funding to support projects and activities supporting the key priorities of my Police and Crime Plan. Grants of up to £2,000 have been made available to charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises tackling anti-social behaviour, promoting crime prevention and building community confidence. I've been very appreciative of the work of these groups over the years. They have helped deliver some fantastic local solutions to local issues providing crucial assistance to the work of our officers.

In total, £605,987 has been donated to support these local community causes.

For both the Commissioners Community fund and the Supporting Victims Fund my website contains details of the grants awarded at <http://www.northumbria-pcc.gov.uk/police-crime-plan/commissioning-services-grants/>

Home Office and other external funding

While Government police funding has been thin on the ground, I'm pleased to have been successful in securing additional finance through both the national Police Transformation Fund and other one-off Home Office funding streams. Since 2013 we

have accessed £11.7m additional funding to deliver projects that benefit the communities of Northumbria.

Projects funded through national funds have focused on improving victim safety and confidence; multi-agency work to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), tackling modern day slavery; safeguarding of serial victims; early youth intervention, tackling domestic abuse; preventing serial perpetrator offending and projects to support the most vulnerable, including children affected by domestic abuse.

A particular success was in 2015 when more than £920,000 was secured to implement schemes to safeguard victims and tackle perpetrators of domestic abuse. The latter of which involved the identification and targeting of some of the most harmful perpetrators through analysis of frequency and gravity of offending via multi-agency tasking and co-ordination (MATAC). This scheme has subsequently been adopted by 6 other forces as part of a 'Whole System Approach' model devised by Northumbria. The innovative scheme has been covered by a range of media outlets including BBC News at 10.

The importance of volunteers

Volunteers can make a real difference and over the years my office has received valuable support from a range of volunteers who have brought various skills, expertise and advice to the work we have undertaken.

From the support of advisory groups to sound out ideas with various communities to the work of our independent custody visitors to check on the detainment of detainees – the volunteers' commitment and knowledge has been invaluable.

The work of my scrutiny panels (rape scrutiny and police complaints) has been hugely beneficial in providing independent oversight, helping improve transparency and ensuring the best possible service is being given to victims and members of the public.

The 'most money saving PCC'

In 2015 an independent survey revealed I had made the highest level of administrative cost savings of any other PCC in England and Wales – savings which totalled almost £3m. The findings showed I had spent £2,912,046 less in 2013-2014 on staff and office costs than the police authority did in 2010-11. This, along with other figures, demonstrated that PCCs cost less than the Police Authorities despite the fact that the role of PCCs has a far wider ambit than that of police authorities.

The savings I made were considered to be a real achievement as I was able to invest the money back into the Force. Saving almost 70 per cent a year on overheads meant every penny could be put into local policing and community safety – priorities for the people of Northumbria. However, the impact of this injection of cash was somewhat eclipsed by the Government's austerity programme and endless cuts.