

From: Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner  
To: Kent Police and Crime Panel  
Subject: HMIC report on Domestic Abuse

### **Executive Summary:**

This paper provides a summary of the recent HMIC report on Domestic Abuse (DA) in Kent. Overall the HMIC report is positive and complimentary about a number of areas of practice.

The report highlights the following:

- DA featuring prominently in the Police and Crime Plan.
- DA is a high priority for Kent Police, underpinned by effective strategic engagement and good chief officer oversight for high risk cases.
- For every 100 DA crimes recorded, there are 89 arrests in Kent – in other forces this varies between 45 and 90 arrests.
- The Force has effective partnerships, which is aided by Commissioner contributed funding.

Recommendations to improve the handling of DA include:

- Training for DA response officers and specialists to be progressed as a matter of urgency.
- The need for officers attending DA incidents to have access to digital cameras.
- Review of long term sustainability of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).
- Ensuring officers are clear about their responsibilities for maintaining contact with the victim and reassessing risk and safety plans in cases where the suspect is either imprisoned or on bail.

Kent Police has put in place an Action Plan to implement the recommendations. The Commissioner will be personally holding the Chief Constable to account for delivery of the plan.

Other work to combat DA in Kent includes the launch of a joint Commissioner and Force awareness campaign during the World Cup, as well as funding to district Community Safety Partnerships, enabling them to deliver a number of local projects focused on DA, such as a DA recovery toolkit, DA freedom programme and DA one stop shop outreach.

### **Introduction:**

1. In November 2013, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) undertook a two week inspection into how Kent Police responds to DA. This was part of a national inspection programme mandated by the Home Secretary, with all 43 forces being inspected.
2. The subsequent 'Kent' report noted a number of areas of positive practice, including;
  - DA features prominently within the Kent Police and Crime Plan.
  - DA is a high priority for Kent Police and this is recognised by staff. There has been effective strategic engagement with partners and good chief officer oversight of individual high risk cases.
  - The Force has effective systems in place to support the identification of DA and initially assess the risk to victims. There are good systems within the Force Control Room to identify repeat callers, gather relevant information and assess the speed of the response needed. They also relay key information to attending officers.
  - For every 100 DA crimes recorded there were 89 arrests in Kent. For most forces this number is between 45 and 90 (positive action at scenes).
  - Where children are present at incidents of DA, staff have a good awareness of the risks involved and the referrals that should be considered.
  - The Force has developed a pilot initiative with a number of schools in Medway, where the school is notified of any DA incident where a pupil is present.

- Multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) arrangements across the Force are well-managed and the Force has received positive external endorsement.
  - The Force works well with local partners, which has been supported through the Commissioner contributing funding with other partner agencies, for a countywide Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) contract.
3. The report made 14 recommendations aimed at improving the Force's response to DA. Key recommendations were;
- A need to ensure that the proposed programme of training on DA for response officers and specialists is progressed as a matter of urgency.
  - Review the arrangements for officers attending DA incidents so they can have access to digital cameras.
  - Together with relevant partners, review the current arrangements for MARACs to ensure they remain sustainable in the future.
  - Review the way in which safety plans for medium and standard risk DA cases are managed and supervised and ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are made clear in circumstances where cases are handed over between attending and investigating officers.
  - Ensure that officers are absolutely clear about their responsibilities for maintaining contact with the victim and reassessing risk and safety plans in cases where the suspect is either imprisoned or is on bail.

**Response to recommendations:**

4. Many of the recommendations were commented upon during a 'hot debrief' provided by the HMIC Inspectors at the end of the inspection. These recommendations as well as observations made by the College of Policing during a review of DA just prior to the inspection were formulated into a comprehensive Action Plan, approved by chief officers.
5. The Commissioner will be holding the Chief Constable to account on the delivery of the Action Plan at the Governance Board on 27 May 2014 and will have continued oversight through this board.
6. The Chief Constable directed that a number of the 'hot debrief' recommendations be actioned immediately, such as the purchasing of digital cameras to take good quality images at DA scenes and changes to the supervision of risk assessments.
7. In addition, to monitor and scrutinise progress, the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Central Operations formed a DA Gold Group with independent external scrutiny and the ACC continues to provide direct updates to the Deputy Chief Constable.
8. Following publication of the Kent HMIC report and final recommendations on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014, the Action Plan was reviewed in order to ensure all the recommendations were being effectively addressed by the Force.
9. Since then, DA Gold Group meetings continue where updates against all actions are provided and progress is robustly monitored.
10. HMIC's expectation is that every force has a comprehensive improvement plan in place by September 2014. Clearly the Force has this in place already and it is anticipated that all actions will either be completed or progress well underway by this date.
11. Key DA partner agencies have been briefed on the inspection and the report recommendations. Actions requiring wider partner support and engagement will be monitored via the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Group. The key focus of this group is to manage risks, through positive working with partners.
12. In addition to the Force specific recommendations there are a number of national recommendations which the Force will be providing updates on via the ACPO Regional DA reporting structure.

13. The Home Secretary will be chairing a national oversight group to monitor DA improvements and will also be implementing mandatory data capture from 2015. Further HMIC inspections will focus on the Multi-Agency response to DA.

#### **Wider work around DA**

14. Over the coming months the Commissioner, in conjunction with the Force, is leading on a comprehensive multi-faceted DA awareness campaign during the World Cup, as evidence suggests that DA increases during major sporting events. The campaign will include a targeted multi-agency tactical response, developing a case to improve the county's response to high risk victims via MARAC and leading on commissioning serial and repeat perpetrator programmes.
15. In addition, the Commissioner will be developing a project to support the children of victims of DA and is holding initial discussions with Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA) to identify national best practice.
16. The Commissioner provides funding to the district Community Safety Partnerships, which enables them to deliver a number of local projects focused on DA. These include a DA recovery toolkit, DA freedom programme and DA one stop shop outreach.
17. The Commissioner is committed to ensuring that victims are placed at the heart of processes and as part of this commitment will be developing a Victims' Centre. This centre will provide a 'one stop shop' service, ensuring that support is tailored to individual needs. The support provided to victims of DA will be incorporated into the development of the Victims' Centre.