

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP13/57

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL -
5 DECEMBER 2013**

SUBJECT: EXCEPTION REPORT - SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCES

SUMMARY:

1. This report shows the progress made by the Constabulary in improving the solved rate for Serious Sexual Offences and provides an update on the College of Policing Peer Review conducted in October 2013.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The Accountability and Performance Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.

1. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

- 1.1 This report is based upon the performance priorities set within the Police and Crime Plan for the financial year to date 2013/14.
- 1.2 Serious Sexual Detections has been a challenging area for the Constabulary and as a consequence various focused areas of activity have been put into place to address this. These are captured within a Serious Sexual Offences (SSO) Action Plan.
- 1.3 As part of the Action Plan, the College of Policing were invited to conduct a Peer Review of the Constabulary with a view to reviewing current investigative practices and identifying any opportunities for improvement.
- 1.4 The Peer Review made a number of recommendations and concurred with many of the workstreams already adopted by the Constabulary via the Action Plan. The paper outlines in more detail the Constabulary's proposed responses to the Peer Review recommendations.

2. EXCEPTION REPORT:

- 2.1 As a consequence of the long term decline in Suffolk of the solved rate for these offences an Action Plan was developed and implemented in July 2012, with the majority of actions being completed and embedded by March 2013.
- 2.2 The Action Plan led to a greater investment of specialist officers into the 'Gemini Teams' that investigate these offences and the creation of a focussed monthly performance meeting to ensure all investigative opportunities were being exploited.
- 2.3 Additionally a dedicated Detective Inspector post assumed control for the Gemini teams to ensure a consistent approach to investigations and to provide the Crown Prosecution Service with a single point of contact within the Constabulary. It was a bespoke responsibility for this post to assume the Chair role of the monthly performance meetings referred to in paragraph 2.3 above. These meetings bring together staff from the various Directorates involved in the investigation of Serious Sexual Offences and investigative opportunities and case progression is discussed on a case by case basis.
- 2.4 As a consequence of these and other actions, significant improvement was made in terms of the solved rate with the current level of detections indicating the Constabulary is on course to deliver the target set within the Police and Crime Plan.
- 2.5 In order to build further on this improved position the College of Policing were invited to conduct a Peer Review in respect of how Suffolk manages cases of Serious Sex Offences and ultimately how performance could be improved further.
- 2.6 The College spent two days in Suffolk (9th/10th October 2013) and subsequently made a number of recommendations to the Constabulary. There was a suggestion that there was a necessity to create an SSO Problem Profile to provide a comprehensive understanding of all the issues around this complex area of work. The Performance Management Unit had already been commissioned by the Constabulary to undertake this work as part of a rolling programme of strategic problem profiles, but due to the complexities and detail required, the completed product is not anticipated until early 2014. This will also consider and make recommendations pertaining to Evidenced Based Policing.

- 2.7 The other recommendations have been adopted into the current SSO Action Plan and have been subject of consideration by the Command Team. A number of these are currently being progressed including the detailed examination and analysis of attrition rates relating to undetected rapes.
- 2.8 There has been specific engagement with the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) to assess ISVA (Independent Sexual Advisor Service) capacity and the creation of a victim satisfaction questionnaire. The results of these will further inform the SSO Problem Profile.
- 2.9 More strategic recommendations concerning the governance of the Gemini Teams and the Force approach to the use of SOIT's (Sexual Offences Investigator Trained) are being considered in conjunction with the Protective Services review.
- 2.10 The recommendation to develop the Serious Sexual Assault Investigators Development Programme (SSAIDP) within Suffolk has been progressed and all Gemini staff have been programmed in to complete this work.
- 2.11 The timing of the Peer Review coincided with the creation of the Crown Prosecution Services RASSO (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) Unit in this region. Helpfully the CPS Lead for this Unit was able to meet the Review Team and contribute to the work. Whilst there are reservations around the capacity of this Unit based in Chelmsford to provide Suffolk with a premium service, it remains too early to assess the impact of this change in working practise. The Gemini Detective Inspector has visited the Unit and agreed the expected service delivery from the Unit and this will be closely monitored in terms of charging decisions and timeliness which are the major impact factors.

Performance

- 2.12 The crime rate for Serious Sexual Offences varies from month to month, although over the longer term Suffolk has seen little change in the number of offences reported. However within the overall figure there is certainly a growing proportion of historic offences that continue to be reported in the wake of media coverage of high-profile investigations into similar offences.
- 2.13 The solved rate of all Serious Sexual Offences is now exhibiting its most consistent improvement for more than two years. This has now been reflected in the latest national Force comparison data, with Suffolk's ranking improving from 40th to 34th between August and October. The solved rate over the twelve months to October 2013 was 22.6%, although this is anticipated to further improve as the performance between April and October was 28.5%.
- 2.14 Current performance in relation to Serious Sexual Offences is 2.4% above the objective level and there is every indication the objective will be achieved.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The measures implemented to date have led to an improved performance in terms of the solved rate for Serious Sexual Offences. This has been sustained for a number of months now indicating there is every likelihood the target in this area will be met.
- 3.2 The SSO Problem Profile, when completed, will further inform and provide greater understanding of this complex area of work which will allow the Constabulary and Partner agencies to enhance service delivery to victims through evidence based policing.

3.3 It is unclear locally and nationally whether the significant increase in historic case reporting will plateau and ultimately subside or whether it will continue at present rates. This will continue to be closely monitored as there is a significant operational impact to investigating such matters.

3.4 Partnership work with the CPS in this area will be with the newly formed RASSO Unit. Whilst in concept this should produce a standardised consistent regional approach, there is a fear the Unit does not have the resilience to cope with the current demand being experienced. It is therefore imperative that the lines of communication between the agencies remain open and that the situation is closely monitored.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

4.1 The performance of the Constabulary hinges on the level of available resources to tackle each of the priority areas. In the current financial climate every effort is being made to maintain front line policing in order to ensure performance against these priorities can be maintained or improved.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS:

5.1 None.

ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)	PLEASE STATE 'YES' OR 'NO'
Has legal advice been sought on this submission?	No
Has the PCC's Chief Finance Officer been consulted?	No
Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered including equality analysis, as appropriate?	No
Have human resource implications been considered?	No
Is the recommendation consistent with the objectives in the Police and Crime Plan?	Yes
Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation?	No
Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media interest and how they might be managed?	No
In relation to the above, have all relevant issues been highlighted in the 'other implications and risks' section of the submission?	Yes