

Report to PCC's re Norfolk & Suffolk Out of Court Scrutiny Panel

Tuesday 14th April 2015

About the Panel

Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary Out of Court Disposals Scrutiny Panel has been set up to independently scrutinise the use of Out of Court Disposals in response to national recommendations following concerns about their appropriate use. The role of the Panel is to ensure that the use of Out of Court Disposals is appropriate and proportionate, consistent with national and local policy, and consider the victims' wishes where appropriate. The Panel aim to bring transparency to the use of Out of Court Disposals in order to increase understanding and confidence in their use. Findings of the Panel, together with responses to recommendations made, are to be reported publicly to support this aim.

How the Panel Operates

The Panel review and discuss case files as a group and conclude one of three categories:

- Appropriate and consistent with national and local guidelines;
- Appropriate with observations from the Panel;
- Inappropriate use of out of court disposal.

Decisions reached by the Panel on each case file are recorded, together with observations and recommendations to inform changes in policy or practice. The Panel also consider performance information regarding levels and use of Out of Court Disposals, and changes to legislation, policy and practice to support them in their role.

Report

The Panel met for the sixth time on 14th April. Eleven Panel members were present, with three apologies.

Panel Business

- The Panel agreed the Decisions Log from the Jan 2015 meeting.

Scrutiny of Case Files

Rationale and file selection

A total of 42 files were made available for scrutiny, selected as follows:

- All adult and youth out of court disposals recorded in the last quarter, in relation to Serious Sexual Offences and Serious Violence Against the Person cases selected at random from a list provided in advance.

Panel findings

Of the 42 cases drawn, 2 were scrutinised. One was considered to be appropriate and consistent with national and local guidance, the second was deemed to contain insufficient information for the panel to reach a decision.

Serious Violence

- The Panel observed that initially this incident had been correctly recorded although further investigation revealed a much less serious nature. The Panel considered the use of the 'Challenge 4 Change' diversion to be appropriate in these circumstances.

Sexual Offence

- The Panel considered the use of a Restorative Case Conference in this case, following deliberation over the documentation presented; the decision in this case was deferred, awaiting the presentation of further information.

Addendum

Following consultation, an error was recorded upon the report presented to PCC for publication regarding the last Panel meeting in January 2015. It was incorrectly reported that the Panel were unable to reach a conclusion re the Sexual Offence case. In fact the Panel did agree that the use of an Out Court Disposal in this case was inappropriate.

Next meeting

Friday 7th August 2015.