

Report of the Norfolk & Suffolk Out of Court Scrutiny Panel

Friday 31st October 2014

About the Panel

Norfolk and Suffolk 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. The 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 considers 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 fourth time on 31st October 2014. Twelve Panel members were present, with five apologies.

Panel Business

- The Panel agreed the 'Terms of Reference' with some minor adjustments;
- Sarah Asbrey, CPS Panel Member, agreed to undertake the role of the Chair of the Panel after two independent Chairs had to withdraw their assistance due to other commitments.

Scrutiny of Case Files

Rationale and file selection

A total of 13 files were made available for scrutiny, selected as follows:

- All adult 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 13 cases drawn, 2 were scrutinised. One was considered to be appropriate, with an observation, the second was deemed to be inappropriate.

Serious Violence

- The Panel observed that an out of date form had been used to record the disposal.

Sexual Offence

- The Panel considered the use of an Adult Caution in this case as inappropriate. The Panel did not feel that this disposal was sufficient to address the vulnerability of the victim in this case.

Next meeting

Friday 23rd January 2015.