



**RESPONSE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER OF WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON TO THE HMICFRS REPORT STALKING AND HARASSMENT - AN INSPECTION OF SUSSEX POLICE COMMISSIONED BY THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER, AND AN UPDATE ON NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS IN HMICFRS'S 2017 REPORT**

**Chief Constable's comments**

The Chief Constable of Wiltshire is committed addressing the recommendations highlighted within the HMICFRS report. It is recognised that there is much to do and Wiltshire is early in their journey to improve the response to stalking and harassment.

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Wiltshire response</b>
<p>Within six months chief constables should ensure that forces record stalking or harassment crimes if appropriate when victims report breaches of orders.</p>	<p>The force has a strategic and tactical lead driving plans to improve service delivery.</p> <p>The improvements already implemented, include the removal of HINs, the review of all stalking offences within the Daily management meeting and a guidance portal on the forces Firstpoint Hub to provide advice, guidance, aide memoires, a training video and best practice to staff</p>
<p>Within six months chief constables should ensure that officers are aware of the importance of treating breaches of orders, where appropriate, as part of a wider pattern of offending, and ensure that force policy and guidance helps officers to do this.</p>	<p>Stalking and Harassment SPOCs have been implemented within Wiltshire to support investigations and ensure the stalking protocol is being adhered to and risks identified and managed. The SPOCs conduct regular reviews of cases including breaches of orders to ensure positive action is being taken.</p> <p>The force has plans in progress to review benefits of implementing stalking clinics and deliver training programmes.</p>

## **Police and Crime Commissioner's comments**

I welcome the "Stalking and Harassment report" which provides an overview of an inspection of Sussex Police, commissioned by Katy Bourne, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex as well as its update on the progress against the national recommendations which were published in HMICFRS's 2017 report.

I appreciate a continuous effort to improve the response by police forces nationally to stalking and harassment as well as all the drive by national organisations such as CPS to provide further recommendations on this topic. At the same time, I understand that there is still a long journey to go on to ensure that the victims of stalking and harassment are protected by the police from the moment when this type of criminal offence is recorded, throughout the criminal justice process and afterwards as necessary.

Since stalking became a specific criminal offence within the Protection from Harassment Act in 2012 in England and Wales, there has been an on-going campaign to raise awareness of the issue as well as to encourage victims to report this type of criminal offence both nationally and locally. In April, we supported the National Awareness week which focused on the impact of stalking on mental health and physical well-being in Wiltshire and Swindon.

As a result of the joint continuous efforts, there has been a considerable rise in stalking offences recorded across Wiltshire and nationally. Stalking and harassment is now recorded separately to other crimes and this significant rise can be directly correlated with crime recording improvements. While nationally there has been an increase by 41% in 2018 when compared with the previous year, Wiltshire Police has recorded an increase of approximately 53% by September 2018. I understand that Sussex Police has recorded a significant increase by 98% over the same period of time.

In spite of the significant improvements in crime recording, the challenge remains the same. Victims of stalking and harassment must be protected by the police from the outset of this type of criminal offence being recorded, throughout the criminal justice process and afterwards as outlined in my Police and Crime Plan. In this regard, I would like to emphasise that we need to work collaboratively with our partners to minimise the devastating impact on victims' lives as much as possible.

In Wiltshire and Swindon, I commission victim services which offer support to all victims including the victims of stalking and harassment. The current service provides an overarching umbrella service to all victims as well as an enhanced service for the victims of the most serious crimes and those who are vulnerable as defined by the Victims Code. The Horizon Victim and Witness Care Unit, which I fund, helps the most vulnerable victims through the criminal justice process across the County.

The Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board, which I chair, has set up Victim, Witness & Most Vulnerable Group in order to monitor and promote the proper care and treatment of victims and witnesses. The key objectives of this group are aligned to the National Strategy & Action Plan as well as my Police and Crime Plan. The group reports their progress to the Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board which brings together key partners and aims to deliver local improvements by working together.

I appreciate that the report praises Paul Mills, Deputy Chief Constable for Wiltshire Police and his contribution to the implementation of the original national recommendations in HMICFRS's 2017 report "*Living in fear - the police and CPS response to harassment and stalking*" as well as his support of the termination of the police information notices (PINs) and their equivalents. In Wiltshire, harassment information notices (HINs) have already been removed.

I will continue to put victims, witnesses and communities at the heart of everything we do whilst ensuring that improvements in the police response to stalking and harassment continue. I am fully aware that in some cases victims' lives will depend on it.

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