



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

Improving Policing across Scotland

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PRESS RELEASE

HMICS publish report on Police Scotland's Investigative Approach to Rape in Fife Division

Strictly EMBARGOED until 1100 hrs Monday, December 22

Police Scotland has made the investigation of rape a policing priority and the creation of the single service brings a more consistent approach to rape investigations.

These inquiries are led by experienced teams of police officers and SOLOs (sexual offences liaison officers) who provide support to victims within 24 hours of a rape being reported, states a report published today.

Local Policing+ Inspection of the Investigative Approach to Rape in Fife Division forms part of the review of local policing in Fife Division which was published in October by HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland. It assesses the state, effectiveness and efficiency of Police Scotland's approach to the investigation of rape in Fife and also looks at the interaction between the local police teams in Fife and the National Rape Taskforce.

HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Derek Penman, said: "Rape and serious sexual crimes are among the most distressing in society. The public tend to associate rape with a violent assault by a stranger, however, in reality the majority of these attacks are carried out in the victim's home by someone known to them.

"It is also the case that, for numerous reasons, many victims do not report the rape at the time and may wait months or years before taking the matter to the police. The current trend is that the level of reports of these non-recent offences is on the increase.

“The majority of rape victims in Fife commented favourably on how they were treated by the police, with the investigative process and their options clearly explained to them. This is echoed by the support groups who report an attitudinal change by police in the investigation of rape with a greater focus on empathy shown to the victim.

“However, I recommend Police Scotland works with its criminal justice partners and rape advocacy groups on ways to measure the victim’s confidence and satisfaction as it was reported to us that almost half of rape victims were not happy with the level of feedback they received as the investigation progressed through the criminal justice process.”

Against a backdrop of an 85% increase in reports, Fife Division had one of the highest detection rates for rape in Scotland during 2013/14. Relationships with the voluntary sector victim support agencies are good, although they are experiencing heightened demand for their services as a result of the increasing number of rape reports.

The report also identifies that the model of the national rape taskforce and the 14 divisional rape investigation units is a good one but its effectiveness is hampered by the current lack of an integrated IT system.

Mr Penman added: “There were examples of good practice in Fife which could be reinforced across Scotland.

“The inspection also highlights there are widely varying figures for reporting across the country with rape reports increasing in 19 of the 32 local authority areas, but dropping markedly in the 13 others. I have suggested Police Scotland commission research to better understand the local variations.

“I support the strong operational focus on domestic abuse and rape investigations, but there can be significant cross-overs between these inquiries and I recommend Police Scotland review the management structures of both task forces to consider if it may be beneficial for them to be brought together under a single public protection banner.” (Note to editors 1).

The report contains eight recommendations for Police Scotland. In addition to the points mentioned above, the recommendations cover training and resourcing, monitoring the impact of preventative measures and working with victim support agencies to balance the needs of the victim and the criminal justice process in non-recent cases. Police Scotland is also encouraged to extend the scope of the National Rape Review team to be more intelligence and risk-led.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Domestic abuse, which is also a priority of Police Scotland, falls under the local policing banner while rape is under the public protection portfolio which is part of the Specialist Crime Division of Police Scotland.

2. The increased reporting of rape does not necessarily mean more rapes have been committed within Scotland. Nationally a third of the offences recorded during 2013/14 were classified as non-recent. This may suggest victims are now more willing to engage with police.

Key Findings and Recommendations from the Report are listed below.

The HMICS Report Local Policing+ Inspection of the Investigative Approach to Rape in Fife Division is available to download at the HMICS website www.hmics.org from 11.00hrs, December 22, 2014.

To arrange a broadcast interview with HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland, Mr Derek Penman, or to request a photograph, please contact:

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REPORT KEY FINDINGS:

Outcomes

- During 2013-14, Fife Division achieved a detection rate of 77.8%, one of the highest detection rates for rape in Scotland.
- The majority of rape victims within Fife commented favourably that the police had sufficiently explained the reporting process to them (82.1%); felt supported in considering the options available to them (75%); had no concerns regarding how they were dealt with (89.2%); and did not feel that the police could have treated them differently (96.4%).
- The level of communication provided to victims within Fife after the initial report is inconsistent. In total, 46.4% of respondents were not satisfied with the level of feedback provided to them as the investigation progressed.
- As the National Rape Taskforce does not have access to local incident and crime systems outwith the legacy Strathclyde Police force area, it remains incumbent on local senior management across Scotland to ensure that reports of rape are identified, monitored and recorded timeously.
- Police Scotland examines areas of high performance as well as low performance and places emphasis on investigative standards and the quality of case submissions. They are committed to victims being at the centre of investigations.

Leadership and governance

- The creation of a single policing service has brought a consistent approach to the investigation of rape across Scotland and created a more equal access to specialist support and national capacity.
- The investigation of rape continues to be a policing priority for Police Scotland.
- Experienced management teams are in place at local and national levels, providing direction to officers under their command and appropriately scrutinising and auditing performance in relation to rape investigation.

Planning and processes

- Support groups have commented in positive terms on the new structures to support the investigation of rape across Scotland and staff have recognised that overall standards have improved.
- The introduction of a 28-day review process has encouraged greater consistency and raised overall investigative standards in the management and investigation of rape across Scotland. However, the process is overly bureaucratic due to a lack of ICT support.
- The National Rape Review Team (NRRT) has been instrumental in improving overall standards, although there is an opportunity to extend the scope of the NRRT towards a qualitative model that is more intelligence and risk-led.
- Police Scotland has sought to engage with previous partners of those who perpetrate domestic abuse. While this has been effective in identifying non-recent victims of rape and securing the conviction of offenders, there needs to be greater consideration of the personal circumstances and emotional impact on these victims.

People

- Following the creation of Police Scotland, many experienced officers transferred directly to the Divisional Rape Investigation Units and the National Rape Taskforce providing continuity of specialist skills and knowledge.
- Managers do not always have time to listen to staff views around service delivery and improvement. This has hindered opportunities for innovation and creativity.
- During our inspection, we met with a number of Sexual Offences Liaison Officers and were impressed by their professionalism and commitment towards a victim-centred approach to rape investigation.

Resources

- The establishment of a National Rape Taskforce and Divisional Rape Investigation Units provides a recognised single point for local and national contact ensuring greater consistency and clearer lines of communication.
- The levels of specialist knowledge across the National Rape Review Team required to effectively carry out investigative reviews are variable potentially leading to inconsistencies.

- Whilst we support the strong operational focus on domestic abuse and recognise the importance of local policing in terms of operational delivery, there are significant cross-overs in terms of public protection policy and specialist rape investigation.

- National Rape Taskforce staff are generally unsighted on information held in the north and east of the country and are restricted from accessing ICT systems outwith what was their legacy force area.

Partnerships

- We found evidence of positive working relationships both nationally and locally between Police Scotland and voluntary sector support groups.

- The proactive approach by Police Scotland in pursuing offenders, including the identification of non-recent victims, is welcomed by support groups. However, this approach has resulted in increased victim referrals which has impacted upon the capacity of support groups.

- We found evidence of strong, professional relationships between Police Scotland and partner agencies.

- Staff involved with the investigation of rape commented that medical facilities across police offices and the equipment therein remain inconsistent across the country.

Report Recommendations:

Recommendation 1

Police Scotland should commission further research and analysis to better understand the local variations in rape reporting across Scotland.

Recommendation 2

Police Scotland should review the national cadre of Sexual Offences Liaison Officers against current and projected demand to ensure there is sufficient capacity and resilience.

Recommendation 3

Police Scotland should develop measures which promote preventative outcomes for rape and sexual offences.

Recommendation 4

Police Scotland should work with its criminal justice partners and rape victim advocacy services to develop joint approaches which measure victim confidence and satisfaction throughout the various stages of the criminal justice process.

Recommendation 5

Police Scotland should extend the scope of the National Rape Review Team to a more qualitative role that is intelligence and risk-led.

Recommendation 6

Police Scotland should engage with rape victim advocacy services to develop an approach to engaging with non-recent victims of rape which balances the needs of the victim with the pursuit of public protection.

Recommendation 7

Police Scotland should undertake a training needs analysis for the National Rape Review Team to ensure staff have the necessary range of specialist skills and competencies to conduct investigative reviews.

Recommendation 8

Police Scotland should review the management structures for the National Rape Taskforce and the Domestic Abuse Taskforce to establish whether there are policy and operational benefits in bringing them both under the professional management of the public protection portfolio.

END