



HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
Improving Policing across Scotland

Monday, 03 December 2018

PRESS RELEASE

HMICS publishes progress review of provision of forensic medical services to victims of sexual crime

There is clear commitment and support from the highest level to make improvements to the provision of forensic medical services to victims of sexual abuse, states a report published today (Monday 3 December).

The establishment of a taskforce to drive the necessary changes; new national standards; funding from the Scottish Government, and commitments to legislative change, have all been welcomed by HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland in the publication which reviews progress since its initial report 18 months ago.

HMCICS Gill Imery said: "The energy, enthusiasm and dedication of the professionals involved in the taskforce, and many more who are responsible for delivering the services to victims of sexual crime continues to be commendable.

"An improvement in these services, so that they meet the needs of the victims, is a priority of the Scottish Government.

"Notwithstanding that, all ten recommendations from our original report remain a work in progress and those involved in the front line of this important service tell us that little has changed on the ground.

"This is against a back drop of increasing numbers of sexual crimes being reported to the police."

The Progress Review of Provision of Forensic Medical Services to Victims of Sexual Crime looks at what advances have been made since March 2017 in achieving improved delivery, taking into account issues which may impact on the achievement of the desired outcomes.

At the time of the original report, the Scottish Government launched the taskforce, led by the Chief Medical Officer for Scotland. This was followed by the allocation from the Government of £2,500,000 to health boards to support facilities for forensic medical examination. A further £3,000,000 is also being made available in each of the next two years.

Additionally new national standards have been published by Healthcare Improvement Service Scotland and NHS Boards have made a commitment that all such examinations will be carried out in appropriate settings by March next year.

In its report today, HMICS encourages NHS Boards and Police Scotland to work together in advance of proposed legislation to transfer the provision of forensic medical examinations from the police to the health sector and for there to be consistent provision across the country.

It welcomes the funding from the Government and the plans to cease the use of police premises for intimate examinations of the victims. It also urges immediate steps be taken to provide suitable facilities for those aged under 18. "It is entirely inappropriate to have children travelling significant distances, incurring considerable time delays and, in some cases, being asked not to wash," said Mrs Imery.

There is still no consistent method of collating information on the volume and nature of these examinations, however HMICS predicts demand for the service will increase in the future. To provide an effective service, more doctors need to be recruited to carry out forensic medical examinations in sexual offence cases, a role that should be separated from the custody healthcare functions.

Mrs Imery said: "All who work in this specialist area unanimously agree that it is critical that improvements in the service are made. It is a priority for many and progress will assist people to come to terms with such traumatic an experience.

"A victim-centred response to sexual crime can have a positive effect on the long-term health and recovery of an individual, continued engagement in any criminal justice process, as well as improved quality of evidence to support any criminal proceedings.

Ends