



To: Chief constables and commissioners
Police and crime commissioners
Heads of public protection units

18 March 2016

Dear colleagues

Recording and investigating crime

I am writing to you regarding the recording and investigation of crime. A succession of high profile cases concerning non-recent child abuse has focused public attention on the approach police take to victims, first at the point of reporting, and then in investigating crime. In cases involving sexual offences, substantial efforts have been made to improve the confidence of victims to come forward and report crimes to the police. It is important that progress is not lost.

This letter sets out the College of Policing's national standards and guidance in this area.

I recently convened and chaired a meeting attended by senior representatives of the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Home Office, the Metropolitan Police Service, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). A representative of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners was invited but was unable to attend in person and submitted views in advance of the meeting.

The meeting considered standards and guidance on recording and investigating crime, with a specific focus on child sexual abuse. These include:

- College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on investigating child sexual exploitation.
- College of Policing guidance for Senior Investigating Officers in cases of non-recent child sexual abuse (Operation Hydrant).
- HMIC recommendations in *Crime recording: making the victim count (2014)*.
- Relevant extracts from Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) guidelines.
- The National Crime Recording Standard and Home Office Counting Rules.

A summary of the current evidence base on why some victims of sexual offences do not report allegations to the police was discussed. One significant reason for not reporting such crimes is concern by the person making the report that they would not be believed. There is evidence that the police approach has changed and that more victims are willing to come forward. There was agreement that continued effort is needed to further improve this confidence, but that this does not require changes to existing standards and guidance.

The meeting came to the following conclusions:

- **Recording crime:** At the point when someone makes an allegation of crime, the police should believe the account given and a crime report should be completed on the relevant force system. If, at the

time of reporting, there is credible evidence to the contrary that determines no crime was committed then the matter should be recorded as an incident.

The act of recording a crime is an important moment in maintaining the confidence of victims of crime, particularly those reporting that they have suffered sexual abuse. This is consistent with HMIC 2014 recommendations on crime recording.

- Crime investigation: at this subsequent stage, College of Policing APP on crime investigation and specific guidance relating to child abuse and non-recent child abuse should be followed. This guidance calls for a thorough investigation of the facts and allegation(s) made.

This is consistent with CPS *Guidelines on Prosecuting Cases of Child Sexual Abuse*, which state: “when assessing the credibility of a child or young person, police and prosecutors should focus on the credibility of the allegation, rather than focussing solely on the victim.”

All evidence should be identified and gathered. The evidence of the victim is but one part of the investigation. The CPS will decide whether to prosecute a case (against the Full Code Test of evidential and public interest stages). It is for a court to decide if a case is proved against any alleged perpetrator.

- This approach to recording crime, then the subsequent investigation, applies to all crime, not just non-recent abuse.
- In cases of sexual offences and child sexual abuse there are important factors relating to the vulnerability of victims. The College guidance and investigator training clearly sets out these considerations, taking account of the lessons learned about the importance of supporting victims of crime throughout the criminal justice process. The Victims’ Charter sets out the measures required to support victims, particularly those who are vulnerable.
- As stated above, it is therefore not necessary to make a change to existing standards and guidance.

We agreed I would write in these terms to chief constables, police and crime commissioners and heads of public protection units. I attach for reference (as Annex A) a short summary of College of Policing guidance relevant to these issues. I hope you find this useful.

Yours sincerely



Alex Marshall
Chief Executive

cc.: Home Secretary
Prof. Dame Shirley Pearce, Chair of College of Policing.