



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg yn ogystal â Saesneg.

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DYFED-POWYS
POLICE AND CRIME
COMMISSIONER

**Police and Crime
Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys**

**Scrutiny Panel
Dip Sampling Exercise**

Review of 2018/19 Quarter 3 (October – December 2018)

**Victim Updates
Complaint Cases discussion**

Panel Members' Findings & Feedback

February 2019

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1.0 Overview

At the tenth meeting of the Commissioner's Quality Assurance Panel held on 21st of February 2019, Members reviewed a sample of domestic incident case files with the aim of focusing on the quality of the victim updates. Within the afternoon the Panel had a discussion with two members of the Professional Standards Department on complaint cases and in particular the standards of correspondence.

2.0 Background, Purpose and Methodology

The background and purpose of the Panel along with how the dip sampling is carried out and what the Panel is asked to consider is detailed in the Quality Assurance Panel handbook, which is available on the [PCC's website](#).

3.0 Victim Updates

The Panel was asked to review a sample of domestic abuse incident cases with the aim of focusing on the quality of the victim updates. The cases reviewed were selected from the November and December 2018 domestic abuse victim survey. As this was a new topic for the Panel to review, a member of Goleudy, the Force's victim and witness service, and a representative of the Criminal Justice department attended to provide an overview. The Panel was asked to have a particular focus on the victim contracts, checking these were in place and that updates were provided in line with the agreed contract. Members were also asked to check that the content of report and contract reflected the risk assessment of individual and that all details of the individual and crime were recorded correctly. The Panel reviewed 5 incidents in total.

3.1 Best practice

Panel Members highlighted the following:

- Members noted positively that a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) had taken place for one of the cases reviewed.
- Members found that one case in particular had been handled very positively; the victim was kept up to date and was communicated with appropriately in line with contract.
- Members felt that two cases had been dealt with and recorded in a timely manner. Within one of these cases all actions were effectively dealt with within four days.

3.2 Areas for learning

Panel Members highlighted some areas of learning:

- Members noted that the victim priority categories within the victim code box have not been completed within all case files reviewed.
- The group felt that within four of the cases reviewed the THRIVE¹ risk assessment on the forms had not been completed correctly to reflect the content of the victim contract and incident. Within one of the cases it was noted that the threat and harm questions were answered with a no, whereas in the contract it is noted that the individual came under the serious crime category, indicating they would likely be at a high risk of threat and harm. In another case the risk of threat was recorded as a no, although the potential of risk towards the person was recorded as yes.
- When reviewing one case the group noted that an incident took place on the 27th of September; however, no updates or information were recorded until the 6th of October. Members recognised that action may have been taken before this date; however, this was not evidenced.
- Within one case there was no mention of the previous domestic incidents until after visits from officers later on in the investigation. Members queried if these could have been highlighted sooner, and whether this may have affected the case.
- It was felt that there was an obvious use of 'copy and paste' being used within the supervisor comment boxes, particularly within one case.
- Within two of the cases no victim agreed contract had been created and therefore the threat risk was not identified within the risk assessment correctly.
- It was noted that one of the incidents was closed after 50 minutes and then re-opened. The incident was closed with no evidence of the individual being asked for a victim personal statement. Members also noted that questions regarding the incident and threat were not filled in until the following day. Members recognise that these questions may have been asked at time of incident, but the forms do not currently allow officers to evidence this.

¹ THRIVE is a risk management tool which considers 6 elements to assist in identifying the appropriate response grade based on the needs of the caller and the circumstances of the incident; Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement.

- Although members recognised that officers are likely to provide information or referrals to appropriate support services following an incident, this does not appear to be recorded within reports, resulting in no evidence of additional support being offered/given.

3.3 Key observations for the Force

<u>Key observations – Victim Updates</u>
Members found that the victim code priorities for each incident were not always completed.
It was felt that the THRIVE risk assessment was not always completed correctly to reflect the individual and the incident.
Members felt that it would be useful to record evidence of signposting individuals to support and services during and after a domestic abuse incident has occurred.

Questions raised:

- Members queried the purpose of the domestic record as this was a duplication of the questions asked on the crime record. The Panel noticed that questions were left blank on domestic records perhaps due to them being answered on the crime record. Is there a way to link the information on the crime and domestic record to avoid duplication and omissions?

Force Response:

There should be no question left unanswered on a Domestic Abuse record in particular the DASH assessment questions (Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment – risk assessment checklist) , as this will calculate the level of risk that the victim is at – i.e. standard , medium or high. The DASH assessment within the Domestic Abuse record is separate from the THRIVE assessment which is found within the Crime Record.

3.4 Force lead (Operational) comments

I acknowledge the feedback report from the QAP dated 21st of February 2019. I was pleased that domestic abuse was selected as the crime type for scrutiny on this occasion as there is a real focus on collective improvement in this regard. Indeed, the most recent HMIC report has given the force additional clarity that further progress can be made. I was pleased to read the balanced feedback within the report and am glad that some of the concerted efforts made by front line staff had been recognised. I refer to the best practice section at 3.1 within the report which highlights good partnership working and timeliness. In relation to the matters raised for learning at 3.2 and 3.3, I acknowledge each point. It was of great interest to me that these same themes have previously been identified as recurrent issues during the force's audit work. Such corroboration adds to the need for us to continue our focus upon domestic abuse and improving the quality of our investigations. I am overseeing the force's victim action plan and I will ensure that these points are reflected within the plan.

With regard to the victim code priorities, I accept that this can be inconsistent. Since the introduction of the victim's contract the interactions between the investigating officers and the victim should be agreed on a bespoke basis. This has made auditing and ensuring consistency in service far harder. We are aware of this and are currently discussing options on how we can improve. The THRIVE assessments have been a welcome introduction to crime reports to assist in recognising vulnerability. It is accepted that there are inconsistencies in how these are applied and recorded and the audit schedule includes some targeted work on this. In addition, the force has trained all operational sergeants during January and February regarding investigations, THRIVES and victim care. This should see us improve in how the system is applied and documented. Finally the signposting to supportive agencies is something that should be recorded somewhere, ideally within the VCOP section of the crime report. Officers are being encouraged to do this as part of THRIVES assessments.

I would like to thank the QA Panel for the time taken to provide this feedback. I will take each point forward as part of the force's action plan together with colleagues who have the lead portfolio for domestic abuse. There is corroboration with other streams of feedback and this will be raised at the next victim's board plus the audit and scrutiny boards.

4.0 Complaints

Within previous meetings the Panel had raised concerns that the correspondence may not be as easy for complainants to understand as they could be. Members expressed particular concerns regarding the use of templates. During this meeting, representatives of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) attended to discuss past concerns raised by the Panel and to give an overview of

the letter writing processes of the department, including their own quality assurance process. The representatives also discussed ways in which the findings from the Panel could help them further in the future, including: highlighting in detail specific examples from case files reviewed within reports; and highlighting both areas for improvement and positive findings, to help promote learning from past incidents.

The Panel's initial feedback from their last review of PSD cases, in October 2018, was discussed in detail. Following greater insights into the department's processes and improving performance, the Panel was assured that cases were being handled efficiently. It was agreed that the Panel's feedback from the October 2018 meeting would be reviewed to ensure the observations would be helpful to continuing the department's improvements.

A discussion also took place regarding the use of templates within complaint correspondence. It was suggested that Members of the Panel work with staff from the Commissioner's office to review key letter templates to ensure they are able to be personalised to each case.