



Discussion at: Joint Independent Ethics Committee (JIEC)

JIEC Date: Wednesday 3rd December

Subject/ Dilemma: **Victim Engagement Programme**

Report of: Mayor for West Yorkshire

Presenter: Detective Sergeant Laura Robinson

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To get independent advice and opinion from the Joint Independent Ethics Committee Members to inform and influence decision making.
- 1.2 For JIEC Members to highlight areas of focus for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chief Constable to consider.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The Women's Safety Unit has been undertaking a programme of activity to scope, gather and respond to the views and experiences of victim/survivors of domestic and sexual abuse from across diverse communities. The engagement focuses on intersectionality and seldom heard groups, seeking to bridge the gap by aiming to interact with victim survivors from these groups.

2.2 The groups have been identified through evaluation of both local and national surveys and various pieces of research. There is a distinct need to examine the intersecting inequalities of victims and survivors of VAWG, for example in reference to their needs, service accessibility, police investigation and criminal justice journeys. By understanding their experiences when reporting domestic abuse/sexual offences to the Police, we can then positively influence policy and practice.

2.3 The objectives of the programme were to ensure victim survivors of domestic abuse and sexual offending are given a voice, seeking the views of victims that best represent the diverse community of West Yorkshire and to increase trust and confidence in the Police

2.4 Outputs of the programme were to boost reporting from marginalised groups that have been highlighted, improve experiences for victims of VAWG by embedding improvements into policy and practice and to reduce victim attrition rates during

investigations. Any learning is also shared and fed back to partners who have facilitated engagement sessions.

2.5 Groups that have been identified are: Black and Ethnic Minority, Gypsy/Irish traveler, Roma, sex workers, women that live in a rural area, women with a physical or mental disability, LGBTQ+, women in the prison estate, victims with an insecure immigration status and older women.

2.6 One of the sessions which has resulted in a change in Policy is a session run by a Leeds based organisation who provide support to women from marginalised groups. The session was well received by both attendees and IDVAs and feedback was that the women felt listened to and valued. The group emphasised the impact of the gender of the attending officer on how comfortable or willing they might be to disclose personal details and/or offending. West Yorkshire Police have been able to respond to these concerns with recent changes to policy, in which those reporting Sexual Offending are able to state a preference of the gender of the officer who attends their call.

3. KEY QUESTIONS/ SPECIFIC AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE COMMITTEE

3.1 The victim engagement programme was a focused effort to improve victim feedback, trust and confidence. We are keen to hear views and thoughts on how we could turn this programme into 'business as usual'. How do we incorporate the voice of the victim in sensitive Rape and Serious Sexual Assault cases going forward?

3.2 How are we able to obtain views/satisfaction of victim survivors of VAWG offences from marginalized groups routinely to continue shaping policies and processes accordingly?

4. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- 4.1 Victim Engagement Strategy Evaluation Framework
- 4.2 Victim Engagement Programme Terms of Reference
- 4.3 VAWG Evidence Synthesis

Discussion Summary

- Members agreed it was right to obtain views/satisfaction of victim survivors of VAWG offences from marginalised groups. Not doing this presented a risk of missing out on rich data which could support policies and procedures to improve services and support for future people.

- Surveying victims of rape and sexual assault, although sensitive, was imperative to obtaining rich data which could be used to shape future training and how WYP approach these crime types going forward. The approach should be led by the victim/ survivor wherever possible. The suggestion that a key worker or trusted specialist may be an option to mediate or make recommendations on individuals who may feel better placed to participate wasn't favoured as it diluted control away from the victim/ survivors.
- After learning that West Yorkshire Police had recently implemented the ability for victims/ survivors to give a gender preference of the officer responding to their case, Members said that this had the potential to let victims and survivors down should their preference not be fulfilled. They asked how satisfaction would recover if they were unable to meet these requests and could this be seen as setting up to fail. Members recommended using data to measure the success rate of preference allocation to inform future decision making.
- Members recommended
- It was suggested information from PSD, where victims have complained about the attending officer, could be used in these instances above.
- It was felt by members that the first stage questions used when meeting with victims felt quite central to the person asking the questions rather than being victim centered and questioned if control was sitting in the wrong place.
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