

**Dyfed-Powys Police and Crime Commissioner's response to: Police super-complaint - *How the police respond to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background and may be at risk of honour-based abuse.***

I welcome the report and its recommendations. This is an important area of policing which the police service must get right. The main findings of the report are therefore of great concern, and I agree that these failures can negatively affect public confidence in the police as well as damage the effectiveness of police investigations.

Dyfed-Powys Police Chief Constable, Dr Richard Lewis and I discussed the super-complaint at our January 2023 Policing Board meeting. This is the forum at which I hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of policing services across the Dyfed-Powys area.

I accept recommendation number 4, and agree that I too, as Police and Crime Commissioner, must play a role in ensuring that the Police understand the needs of ethnic minority victims of sexual abuse who may be at risk of honour-based abuse.

***Recommendation 4: Both police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and community safety partnerships include a consultation process as part of their work to identify their priorities. PCCs should make sure this consultation process is inclusive and representative of the whole community before commissioning services for victims. PCCs should then work with local police, safeguarding partners and specialist support organisations to understand the needs of ethnic minority victims of sexual abuse who may be at risk of honour-based abuse. PCCs should consider these needs when commissioning local support services. The aim of this is to give victims the confidence to report incidents, to feel safe and empowered, and to stay involved in any investigation and prosecution.***

To support the development of my current Police and Crime Plan, my team and I ran a comprehensive public consultation exercise incorporating a mixture of facilitated sessions targeting lesser-heard groups, direct stakeholder and partner consultation, and public communication and engagement. Through the targeted facilitated sessions, I was able to ensure that representatives from ethnic minority groups across the Force area were given the opportunity to share their views on my policing priorities. I am thankful that representatives from several local Mosques and the Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team Wales, as well as the National Campaign Manager from Black Lives Matter Wales were present during those sessions.

Furthermore, during my regular engagement activity, I meet with community members and community groups to discuss local issues and local policing priorities. My Engagement team work hard to ensure that the individuals and groups I meet with are inclusive and representative of the whole local community.

I can confirm that my Office ensures the completion of a needs assessment of victims and vulnerable people every four years, as per the Ministry of Justice's guidance. Indeed, my Director of Commissioning and Partnerships is currently working alongside colleagues from the offices of the Gwent and South Wales Police and Crime Commissioners to collaboratively undertake a victim needs assessment. It is a requirement of the assessment – identified by all three Commissioners involved – that the consultation process is inclusive and representative of the whole community, including ethnic minority victims of sexual abuse who may be at risk of honour-based abuse.

In addition to this, I am a key active member of the Regional Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Board and the Regional Safeguarding Boards for both adults and children. This ensures a shared commitment to understanding the needs of all minority groups and addressing their needs through the commissioning of services, whether that be single or jointly commissioned arrangements.

The report also sets out recommendations for Chief Constables, and as such, I have sought assurance from the Chief Constable as to the Force's response to victims of sexual abuse when the victim is from an ethnic minority background.

I am aware that the Chief Constable will be submitting his own response to the recommendations to the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), but I would like to provide details of the Chief Constable's response below, both for the attention of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioner (APCC), whom I am aware are collating Commissioners' responses, but also for members of the public and interested parties.

**Recommendation 1: *We found forces generally only include the risk of honour-based abuse in their domestic abuse policies, so we recommend that Chief Constables update their forces' sexual abuse policies to include the risk of honour-based abuse.***

- Dyfed-Powys Police has a bespoke Policy for honour-based abuse and forced marriage, under their strategic priority to *Protect Vulnerable People*.
- The Force recognises that honour-based abuse and forced marriage may also be a form of domestic abuse or sexual violence, so officers are directed to consider the honour-based abuse and forced marriage Policy alongside their domestic abuse and other associated policies.

**Recommendation 2a: *Chief Constables should make sure that officers and staff are aware of the demographics of the communities they police so they can understand the nuances of different cultures and have time to learn about those communities.***

- Two Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) iterations of problem profiles were produced by Dyfed-Powys Police in 2022. These reference the ethnicity of victims of “in scope” crimes and when considering Suspect Profiles.
- Local authority area VAWG profiles have also been produced and shared with police officers, staff, and partners to inform their understanding of the impact of VAWG in their local areas.
- The problem profiles highlight that reporting from ethnic minority groups reflects the Force area’s ethnic minorities population.
- The Chief Constable recognises the need for a robust engagement plan to promote the relationship between local police and minority groups, to enhance the knowledge and understanding of different religions and cultures, and to promote accessibility and reporting methods. This is encompassed in the Force’s 2022 Engagement Plan.
- The Force has previously shared information around important religious holidays to improve staff knowledge and understanding.
- They will endeavour to provide opportunities for learning about different cultures over the next year.

**Recommendation 2b: *Chief Constables should make sure that independent advisory groups or equivalent groups reflect these demographics.***

- Our Independent Advisory Group – run jointly by the Force and my Office, is small in number, with some ethnic minority groups represented.
- The Force is seeking to recruit a wider cross section of our communities to ensure broader representation.
- This work, led by the Force’s Equality and Diversity Team, is ongoing.

**Recommendation 2c: *Chief Constables should make sure that forces work with the local communities they police to prepare up-to-date information on culture and religion and ensure officers have access to it.***

- The Chief Constable acknowledges that diversity training and awareness-raising in respect of religion, culture and ethnicity is a gap across Dyfed-Powys Police.
- Some information is available on the Force’s intranet page, but this is limited. The Chief Constable acknowledges this requires action within the next six months.
- Officers and staff undertaking specialist roles will have enhanced knowledge and have received additional training to equip them to undertake their roles:
  - Domestic Abuse Officers and Supervisors have received additional training from Bawso;
  - A separate input has been delivered by Bawso to the Detective Inspectors for Safeguarding and the Police Online Investigation Team; and
  - Vulnerability Hub staff have the knowledge to manage the safeguarding and enhanced risks in cases of honour-based abuse.

- The Force's regional Bawso Co-ordinator – a role funded by my Office, attends the VAWDASV Group chaired by the Detective Chief Inspector for Public Protection / Detective Inspector responsible for domestic abuse. This has developed the Force's working knowledge of the additional risks faced by victims of honour-based abuse.
- The Bawso Co-ordinator will work from the Force's Vulnerability Hub on a regular basis in 2023, which will allow the Force to seek guidance on internal messaging and identify engagement opportunities to improve the knowledge of officers and staff.
- The Force routinely promote the referral of victims from minority ethnic groups to Bawso.
- The Force is confident in the awareness of this referral process within our commissioned services, who will refer their service users to Bawso where appropriate.
- On all courses relating to sexual offences, modern day slavery and domestic abuse, officers and staff are informed of the services offered by Bawso.

**Recommendation 2d: *Chief Constables should make sure that investigations consider any extra factors that might be relevant because of the culture and background of the victim or suspect.***

- I am advised that the Force has relatively low numbers of reports of honour-based abuse and forced marriage.
- Should an officer be assigned a case of honour-based abuse or forced marriage, the Force's intranet page offers a repository of information to ensure that the cultural and religious context is considered as part of the investigation and safeguarding response.
- The Force promotes the College of Policing Guidance on honour-based abuse which clearly articulates the additional risks associated with abuse in certain religious and cultural settings.

**Recommendation 3: *As part of the Government's Tackling violence against women and girls strategy (2021), forces are working on understanding crime data in relation to sexual abuse and honour-based abuse. Chief Constables must prioritise this work.***

- The Force is working to progress existing His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recommendations in respect of adapting recording practices to incorporate protected characteristics.
- This is ongoing work with a view to this being in place following the integration of NICHE information management system from May 2023.

I am reassured by the steps the Force has taken to date, and those that they intend to take. This demonstrates an understanding of the importance of considering the cultural background of a victim of sexual assault, and the risk of honour-based abuse.

THIS RESPONSE IS ALSO AVAILABLE IN WELSH



There is however obviously work still to be done. I will continue to scrutinise the Force's progress against the recommendations, as well as the actions set out above, through the appropriate forums.