

## *Appendix 1*

# **Scrutiny Management Board Briefing from Chair of Cumbria Police and Crime Panel**

### **1.0 Purpose of Update**

- 1.1 This report updates Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) on the main policy updates from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner related to policing and community safety.

### **2.0 Board Meeting Update**

- 2.1 The Panel last met on 7 February. The meetings of the Panel scheduled for 7 April and 22 May have been cancelled.

### **3.0 Additional Scrutiny activity undertaken by the Board**

- 3.1 The Chair is receiving regular briefings on issues in relation to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. A number of national policy initiatives and issues have emerged during this period which are of significance.

#### **Emergency funding to support the most vulnerable victims during COVID-19 crisis**

- 3.2 The Government has announced £76m of extra funding for support services for vulnerable victims (including victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence and modern slavery).
- 3.3 PCCs have responded to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, recognising that it has a significant impact on victims who may be locked indoors with perpetrators and ensuring that funding is made available to the most vulnerable across our communities.

#### **Domestic Abuse**

- 3.4 Since the introduction of the lockdown on 23 March, the charity Refuge has reported a 25% increase in calls and online requests for help. In light of this general increase in instances of domestic abuse, the Government has announced the following funding and policy measures which the Panel is closely monitoring:

- The Home Office is working with charities and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to provide an additional £2m to bolster domestic abuse helplines and online support

- £750m funding available for charities will be available to charities which support domestic and sexual abuse victims
- £3.1m funding for specialist services for children who have both been directly and indirectly affected by domestic abuse – this will split between local authorities, children’s charities and PCCs
- Further £76m to support the most vulnerable in society, including survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, vulnerable children, rough sleepers and victims of modern slavery
- The Domestic Abuse Bill received its Second Reading in parliament on 28 April. This will create a definition of domestic abuse for the first time, and establish a legal duty on supporting victims of domestic abuse through safe accommodation
- Separately, the Ministry of Justice have awarded £2.5m to community services which divert women away from crime

### **Covid-19 impact on crime**

3.5 The National Police Chiefs Councils have reported an overall reduction in crime by 28% in the four weeks to 12 April, compared with the same period last year. However, more people are reporting crime online – a 61% increase. The Panel are seeking assurance from the Police and Crime Commissioner on the local breakdown, as part of its wider briefing from the Office of the PCC.

### **Local initiatives**

3.6 The Panel are continuing to engage with the Office of the PCC to identify how the Commissioner is responding to the impact of Covid-19 on the strategic objectives within the Police and Crime Plan, and on mitigating the impact of commissioned services in supporting vulnerable people.

3.7 Recently, the Commissioner has announced the following initiatives which support those suffering from, or at risk of, domestic and sexual abuse.

- Introduction of the Bright Sky app, which provides advice to people in abusive relationships. This can also be used by practitioners and employers looking for advice and information around issues such as online safety, stalking, harassment and sexual consent.
- Introduction of Victim Support’s online live-chat, which enables victims of crime in Cumbria to seek real-time advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The service offers advice on all types of crime, such as fraud, theft, and sexual and domestic abuse.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 The Panel continues to closely engage with the Association of Police and Crime Panels, a collective body for PCPs across England and Wales. Through the Association, the Panel is sharing learning and techniques in providing a challenge and support function during the crisis period. The Association has developed a series of key lines of enquiries, when considering scrutiny of the PCC. The Panel will consider these within the local strategic context.

**Chair: Cllr William McEwan**