

## **The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes**

### **An inspection of the police response to honour-based violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation December 2015**

#### **Background**

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) national thematic examines how effective police forces in England and Wales are at protecting people from harm caused by honour-based violence (HBV), forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and at supporting victims of these offences.

The inspection assesses against the following 4 areas to determine forces 'overall preparedness' for protecting people from HBV.

- Leadership
- Awareness and understanding
- Protection
- Enforcement and prevention to determine

The report includes several recommendations, three of which are generic to all forces.

- **Recommendation 9:** Chief Constables in consultation with partner agencies should undertake research and analysis using diverse sources to understand better the nature and scale of HBV, FM and FGM in their force areas, and use this information to raise awareness and understanding of HBV, FM and FGM on the parts of their police officers and staff.
- **Recommendation 10:** By June 2016, Chief Constables should ensure that information management processes are in place to record and flag HBV, FM and FGM information in an efficient and systematic way so that the risk to individual victims is identified at an early stage and properly assessed and managed throughout the progression of victim's case.
- **Recommendation 11:** By June 2016, Chief Constables along with partner agencies should ensure they have clear polices and joint working structures in place to ensure an integrated approach to HBV, FM, FGM between police forces and other agencies.

#### **Police & Crime Commissioners Response**

I welcome with interest the findings from the first inspection HMIC has conducted on the police response to HBV, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The report provides an extensive insight into these crimes and clearly highlights the need for all forces to better understand the complexities of HBV, forced marriage and female genital mutilation if they are effectively to tackle these hidden crimes and encourage victims to come forward.

Although the population demographic of Devon and Cornwall does not generate high volumes of reports, I acknowledge that crimes of this nature can exist in any culture or community. I recognised the importance of officers, staff and partner agencies in being able to identify incidents of such violence in our communities.

Along with 40 other force areas, Devon and Cornwall have been graded overall as 'Not yet prepared' for protecting people from harm from HBV. HMIC found that the Force was prepared in terms of 'Protection' from these crimes but graded the Force as 'Not yet prepared' in 'Leadership'; 'Awareness and understanding' and 'Enforcement and prevention'.

Despite our grading, I am assured the Force can deal with such incidents. While Devon and Cornwall has not had a large number of high profile, honour based violence investigations, the Force are confident they have the right skills, partnership and community links to ensure any allegations of this kind would be appropriately dealt with by specialist officers .

I have noted the recommendations made in the report. I will be encouraging the Chief Constable to focus on improving the areas identified and monitor the progress made. I will continue to work closely with partners to develop the co-ordinated approach needed to protect, support and safeguard victims.