



An inspection of Devon and Cornwall Police November 2015

Witness for the prosecution: Identifying victim and witness vulnerability in criminal case files

Background

This was a joint inspection conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCSI) which reviewed the quality of criminal case files. It considered how effective police forces are in providing accurate information of the circumstances of the case, identifying the vulnerability of victims and witnesses, and assessing and managing risks so the needs of witnesses and victims are met.

The findings are specific to Devon and Cornwall Police but in addition a national thematic report pulling together key themes, effective practice and areas for improvement across the police service as a whole has been published.

Police & Crime Commissioners Response

I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide my formal response to the above inspection.

Whilst it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions from a relatively small sample size, I am encouraged that the indicative findings highlight some good work by Devon and Cornwall Police to ensure the best outcome for victims and witnesses.

I recognise the importance of summarising all the relevant information in the correct sections of the police report to assist prosecutors in their role of presenting evidence in the most effective manner. Therefore I welcome the fact that HMIC considered eight of the ten cases they reviewed to contain an adequate summary of the key evidence, and in all ten cases files contained an adequate summary of the interview.

I am pleased that the inspection report established that Devon and Cornwall Police correctly identified the vulnerability and risk of harm of the victim and witness in all of the case files examined, so officers can effectively drive this through the criminal justice system.

Although special measures or enhancements were requested by Devon and Cornwall in the majority of applicable cases I would like to see requests made in all cases, to ensure that all vulnerable and intimidated victims or witnesses receive the necessary provisions to help them give their best evidence in court and relieve some of the stress associated with giving evidence.

I note all report findings and remain committed to supporting vulnerable victims or witnesses. I will work with the Chief Constable to ensure that the ten national recommendations relevant to Devon and Cornwall are implemented locally and will continue to closely monitor the ability of Devon and Cornwall Police to play its part in delivering an efficient and effective criminal justice system which puts the needs of victims and witnesses first.