

The following changes have been made by Dorset Police since 2015 which address the learning from the DHR / SAR 'Harry' case

Public Protection Notice ('PPN')

Although the force used another system, the adult safeguarding system changed on 20 May 2015, and since the incident, the force is now using PPNs.

The previous system meant that police information was not known to other agencies which resulted in a lack of multiagency risk identification, assessment and action planning. Limited information was historically shared by and with the police, so the police held no information regarding the protection plans in place for individuals.

The PPN operates by officers identifying an 'adult at risk' (Care Act 2014) during the course of their duties, completing a PPN which they send electronically to the Safeguarding Referral Unit (SRU). The SRU officers review and assess PPNs and send them to the local authority adult services for consideration of an adult safeguarding enquiry (S.42 Care Act 2014).

A PPN aide memoire has now been produced, 'BE CURIOUS and act', as a pocket notebook insert for all frontline officers and staff.

The force has now created a Force Adults at Risk Detective Inspector role and increased the number of officers working within the SRU. A SharePoint page on the Dorset Police intranet has also been created providing access to all officers and staff to guidance around PPNs and adults at risk. This includes news items for reminding and updating officers and providing the latest guidance.

These actions have led to a significant increase in the number of PPNs completed. At present, 500 Adult PPNs are created and submitted a month.

Safeguarding Alert System

The SRU now has an alert system in place to identify incidents were a PPN should have been completed and has not been. The SRU have a system in place to identify multiple PPNs submitted for the same person and they take action in such cases to address any escalating risk identified.

Risk Assessments

The force has ensured that all officers understand the importance of identifying domestic abuse and completing the required risk assessment, the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment ('DASH') tool, to inform their decision making.

Policy and procedures have been updated to incorporate learning. The 'Domestic Abuse Investigation Policy and Procedure' has been updated and now includes the following:-

Adult at risk ('AAR') procedures:

"An AAR of abuse is someone who has needs for care and support (including healthcare), is experiencing or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect, or the risk of it. Local authorities have a duty to consider the needs of an AAR under section 42 of the Care Act 2014.

When dealing with an AAR, the subject must be asked wherever possible if their details may be forwarded on to partner agencies, such as Social Services, Health or Probation Service. If, after the discussion with the AAR who has mental capacity (See College of Policing APP), they decline any intervention, their wishes will be respected unless there is a public interest, for example, not acting will put others or children at risk. There is a duty of care to intervene when, for example, a crime has been or may be committed. If the AAR does not have mental capacity then information may be shared on the principles of best interests.

It is important to note the difference between an AAR, as described above, and the definition of vulnerability. They are different. A vulnerable person is described 'A person is vulnerable if as a result of their situation of circumstances they are unable to take or protect themselves, or others, from harm of exploitation'.

Officers dealing with a vulnerable adult or AAR must consider whether any advice or guidance provided to an individual is understood. Some victims and offenders may not have the capacity to understand safeguarding advice or instructions. If you have any concerns, seek support from an appropriate professional, for example a specialist social worker or mental health worker. Learning from a recent Domestic Homicide Review ('DHR') found that advice provided to a victim of domestic abuse was not fully understood and therefore ignored, which placed the victim at further risk of harm.

For further details about AAR please click here for the Intranet site."

PNN submissions:

"PNN stands for Public Protection Notices. These are forms that are available through NICHE. The forms have two main purposes. One is for officers to make referrals to partner agencies when they have concerns about vulnerable people. The PPN is also used as a risk assessment tool for victims of domestic abuse and stalking and harassment (DASH). The PPN needs to be completed to a high standard and the niche record appropriately 'linked' to ensure that vital information can be shared with partner agencies, when it is necessary and lawful to do so.

A DASH risk assessment should be completed for every domestic abuse, stalking and harassment incident. Information on DASH can be found here for the Safelives guide to DASH. Information about PPN could be found here for the Niche PPN guidance."

Initial attending officer responsibilities include:

“Attending officers and investigating officers should ensure they comply with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime which can be found here. Procedures should be clearly explained, the views of the victim taken into account and they should be updated as to the progress of the investigation. The identification of any vulnerabilities should be identified and reasonable adjustments made to enable an effective investigation with suitable safeguarding.”

Learning from DHRs includes:

“Officers should ascertain if any vulnerable victim, especially AAR, is working with any other agencies. If not referrals should be made to assist with the long term safeguarding. If they are, these agencies should be consulted to help develop a safeguarding plan, potentially through the use of a MARMM.”

‘Look beyond the obvious’

Dorset Police have invested significantly in training for all front line officers in their responsibilities regarding dealing with domestic abuse. In particular, responding to domestic abuse training took place in 2016/17 which was delivered by Women’s Aid as a Continuous Professional Development event for all front line officers. This covered the recording and investigation of domestic abuse and introduced the new offence of Coercive Control.

Dorset Police have developed the understanding of all frontline officers and staff of safeguarding procedures by delivering adult safeguarding training within all courses. For example this now features within the initial officer training and Sergeant Development courses. Safeguarding specific courses, such as the Domestic Abuse Training 2016/17 and the ‘Look beyond the obvious’ vulnerability training in 2018/19, have also been delivered.

The College of Policing ‘Look beyond the obvious’ training has been implemented within Dorset Police. The objectives of this full day of training are; to further improve the skills of the front line to effectively support the complex needs of vulnerable individuals, to encourage professional curiosity and to ensure forces are better equipped to deal with the shift in demand towards safeguarding and public protection.

The full range of training delivered consistently implements the learning by use of the National Decision Model (‘NDM’) to make operational decisions. The ‘Look beyond the obvious’ vulnerability training now in place provides a further input on the NDM, and the responsibility to take positive action.

Make the Difference Team

The force, Make the Difference Team, led by a Detective Chief Inspector has been created. This is a performance and review team which we did not have in 2015. The team carries out a comprehensive review and audit programme of crimes and incidents, identifying where investigations are not meeting the force standard,

outlining action to be taken, reporting back to local managers on the performance of their teams as well as identifying themes for force wide learning.

Officer responsibilities are set out clearly within force policy and procedure. The Make the Difference Team review investigations against these policy and procedures and take action to develop understanding and application of the procedures directly with those concerned and by way of newsletters.

The Make the Difference Team are currently undertaking a force wide domestic abuse audit to identify further areas for improvement for the force. These findings are due to be reported in April 2019.

Crime Recording

National changes to the way police record crime were made in 2015 and this has led to considerable change within the force in the area of crime recording and compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. The incident reported on 13 May 2015 by Harry was not recorded as a crime and would be recorded and investigated differently today.

The force now records crime when the caller first contacts the police if on the balance of probabilities, the circumstances amount to a crime and there is no credible evidence to the contrary.

All crime records are searchable so if a person reports another crime, details of previous crimes recorded can be viewed. To embed these significant changes to the recording of crime the force provided training to all officers during the 'Autumn Crime Training' events in 2015. The objectives of this training were to develop officers understanding of the requirements to record a crime and provide victims with their statutory entitlements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

In addition to the training, an audit team has been created to ensure compliance with the recording of crime with regular audits being completed. An existing team, the Crime Management Unit, now focus on reviewing all crime allegations within 24 hours.

These changes have significantly improved crime recording. I am confident that if such an incident happened today, it would not be dealt with in the same way. The force has better processes and methods of recording crime which provides a solid foundation for a professional investigation and effective safeguarding of the victim.

Expectation of Police Sergeants

The expectation of sergeants to set standards, task and review work allocated are clear and are outlined in Force Policy and Procedures. The requirement for all acting sergeants to attend the Acting Sergeants Core Leadership Development Programme before starting any acting sergeant duties is set out in the Force Promotion of Police Officers Policy and Procedure.

The Acting Sergeant Core Leadership Development Programme and the National Police Promotion Framework (NPPF) Sergeants Programme ensures that all Sergeants have the necessary training to complete the role expected of them.

The force monitors compliance with this policy ensuring all acting sergeants attend the course before acting duties start. If there is an immediate operational need to act up an officer who does not have the necessary training, then the matter is now referred to the Senior Management Team. This team will risk assess and authorise or not. An acting sergeant authorised in this way by the Senior Management Team is now not permitted to complete investigation reviews and does not have the access for supervisors to the force IT system

Vulnerable and Intimidated Victims and Witnesses Policy and Procedure

The force has updated its Vulnerable and Intimidated Victims and Witnesses Policy and Procedure. This now makes it clear that “Where an officer or member of staff identifies a witness who may be eligible for a video recorded interview they need to identify an officer who can conduct an interview. As staff interviewing vulnerable and intimidated witnesses must be trained to do so.”

The new policy and procedure also provides that “Investigators do not need to have evidence in chief recorded before an arrest is made. Where necessary first accounts and information gathered from primary investigation can be used to NDM whether an arrest and/or interview are needed. If investigators or supervisors are unsure about which route they should be taking then they should call the specialist unit most relevant to the investigation for guidance.”

The force has delivered securing video witness evidence training in the initial investigator training, the Autumn 2015 Crime Training event, the College of Policing vulnerability training 2018, Acting Sergeant Core Leadership Development Programme, NPPF Sergeant Programme and the Victim Code of Practice 2017 e-learning.

Force Tasking Processes

The Force Intelligence Bureau (‘FIB’) now focusses on an intelligence-led approach to threat, risk and harm. The FIB has a dedicated vulnerable adult’s desk, an analyst and a researcher, developing and supporting vulnerable adult investigations.

Force data systems automatically identify repeat PPNs, repeat victims and repeat offenders. This enables identification of patterns of offending and repeat victims that require further investigation. FIB leads the force tasking and coordination processes where complex repeat vulnerable adult cases are allocated for further investigation.

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