



13th April 2022

I welcome the report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Service (HMICFRS) 'A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape – phase two: Post-charge' published on the 25th February 2022.

The report concludes that the criminal justice system is failing to provide a satisfactory level of service to victims of rape. It is unacceptable that rape victims receive poor outcome rates, and I recognise that communication with victims by police and prosecutors needs improvement. The widespread perception that victims are being investigated or standing trial needs addressing.

I have discussed the report with the Chief Constable and have been reassured that the recommendations in the report are being progressed, and an eleven-point plan has been developed. The plan includes increased support and contact with victims, with referrals to Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and other support mechanisms. There is focus on more joined up working with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), and timelines will be closely monitored.

Investigators will ensure that bad character is considered in all cases, and victims will be offered special measures at court, as well as having the opportunity to make a personal statement.

As Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB), I will be working with partners across the criminal justice service to identify challenges preventing delivery of effective service, and ultimately justice for victims. I believe we can improve partnership working to achieve better outcomes and I will make this a key aim of the group.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a priority in my Police and Crime Plan. I closely scrutinise the Constabulary in this area and recently held a VAWG 'deep dive' with the Chief Constable where rape was discussed at length. Furthermore, I have commissioned services to support rape and sexual assault victims, as well as implemented preventative initiatives.

RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre) is an aftercare co-commissioned service for Cheshire and offers specialist support, independent advocacy services, counselling, help and support. RASASC have six ISVAs working with victims and offer a helpline, therapeutic counselling and group work. I also fund a dedicated male advisor with lived experience to support male victims.

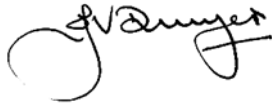
Furthermore, I have secured additional IDVAs (Independent Domestic Violence Advisors) and ISVAs across the area in local authorities and hospitals.

We support an organisation called Survive who provide sexual violence support and counselling for historical sexual assault and rape victims. A successful 'Safer Streets 3' bid

funded training for a Sexual Violence Liaison Officer (SVLO) within Chester University, as well as bystander training for the night-time economy.

The 'Safety of Women at Night' fund enabled Cheshire to be the first force in the North-West to use GoodSAM technology. This enables control room operators to use a caller's phone as a live camera to secure evidence, provide reassurance and be a real deterrent for offenders. It assists police in swiftly locating a victim and we are already seeing positive results.

I will monitor the Constabulary's performance against the recommendations in the report through updates at force performance day and my scrutiny agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Dwyer'. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'J' and a prominent 'D'.

John Dwyer

Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire