

Home Secretary  
c/o Gareth Redmond  
Head of Police Transparency Unit  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

31<sup>st</sup> March 2014

Home Secretary,

**North Yorkshire's Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCCs) response to HMIC's Report on Rape Monitoring Group – Rape Data 31 January 2014**

I welcome the work and findings of the HMIC in what is a very sensitive area of policing, often with far reaching life long effects for victims.

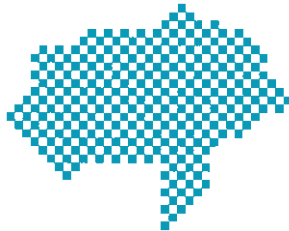
North Yorkshire Police (NYP) deal with all allegations of rape and sexual assault as sensitively as possible. All calls for service are dealt with as a 'priority', although of course some cases require more care and involve additional difficulties than others. NYP of course also recognise that we are only dealing with those victims who have come forward and are in the criminal justice system whilst a whole range of victims are suffering in silence. Not only do NYP need to improve the support we give to victims once with them, but also encourage victims to feel supported enough to come forward, and trust they will be dealt with sympathetically.

NYP endeavour to offer immediate and ongoing support and expertise to victims, whilst acknowledging that victims often have different needs, some of which are harder to fulfil than others. There is always more NYP can do to support victims of these crimes, and understandably have to balance the needs of victims of these sorts of crimes with the needs of other victims, vulnerable people and high risk groups.

I concur with national studies that indicate rape goes under reported and this is borne out locally to some degree by some of the historical allegations the police deal with, often reported months or years after the offence took place. This has been reflected by our third sector agencies, who are also raising concerns about the number of historical cases coming forward.

In North Yorkshire there is a need to ensure we continue to provide the best services we can to victims of rape, and whilst I am by and large confident the police service are dealing with those needs appropriately, I will not shy away from the challenge of improving our services wherever possible. The numbers of 'no crime' incidents is one example of a cause for concern, as it will be in most other parts of the country, and I will continue to monitor this carefully. In addition, I am intending to commission additional support services for victims, beginning October 2014.





North Yorkshire Police and our partners in the broader criminal justice system fully appreciate that for many victims the process of prosecution can involve considerable stress for victims, and continue to work together to make this as comfortable as possible. We are committed to ensuring that our managers and staff prioritise and deliver an enhanced service to victims of sexual and domestic violence crime. This includes ensuring that specialist resources investigate reports to the police and, through work with statutory partners and the voluntary sector that effective support is in place. By doing so it encourages victims to have the confidence to take action and feel safe throughout the investigative and criminal justice journey.

To help and encourage this we have seen the introduction and continued development of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) – known as Bridge House - which provides a safe and confidential environment away from police premises where victims are able to report such crimes, obtain advice and support on access to a variety of support networks and decide, on their terms, how they would wish the police to proceed.

Since opening nine months ago, Bridge House has seen 38 victims of sexual crime contact the centre directly. Staff are keen to see more victims use the services of this important facility which is available to all men and women across North Yorkshire. Bridge House is designed to provide victims of sexual crime with help, support and options rather than having to report directly to the Police. I do however have concerns about awareness of the facility amongst the public and will be encouraging the police service to develop plans for ongoing communications.

As explained, we know there is chronic under-recording of rape and sexual assaults across the country. It is important that improvements are made nationally, ensuring as many victims as possible feel confident enough to report these incidents, and that they get the right support and care once they have taken that courageous decision. This relies on a relentless focus on the needs of the victim, which has been at the heart everything I do as Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire.

Efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system also needs to be called into question. I feel reporting will only rise when there is confidence across the board, but the police must not shy away from their part of that challenge.

Yours sincerely

Julia Mulligan  
North Yorkshire's Police & Crime Commissioner

