

Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham

Police Headquarters

Aykley Heads

Durham

DH1 5TT

Telephone Number: 0191 3752001

Email: [general.enquiries@durham.pcc.pnn.gov.uk](mailto:general.enquiries@durham.pcc.pnn.gov.uk)

Website: <http://www.durham-pcc.gov.uk>

**Priti Patel MP**

**Home Secretary**

**Home Office**

**2 Marsham Street**

**London**

**SW1P 4DF**

**Police and Crime Commissioner: Joy Allen**

**Monitoring Officer: Stephen White**

**24 March 2022**

Dear Home Secretary,

**HMICFRS Inspection Report: PEEL Assessment 2021/22**

This letter constitutes the response to the above inspection from myself, Joy Allen, Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, in order to fulfil my responsibilities with regard to Section 55 of the Police Act 1996. The reply to HMICFRS will also be published on my website.

In turn, here are position statements showing what the Constabulary is doing to meet the recommendations and areas for improvement which relates to Chief Constables, of which I am in support:

**AFI 1- The force should make sure that, whenever possible, callers are told when agreed appointment and response times are changed.**

### The force has made good progress on this, diary appointments are being monitored by Diary Supervision and they ensure that any change in appointment time or response grading is communicated. The diary appointments are generally only changed if there is a further incident or review that would alter the risk. The force has ensured that all dispatchers, call handlers and their supervision have been reminded to inform the caller when there is a change in response time and the reason this communication is required. The force is continuing to monitor the impact of these additions.

**AFI 2*-* The force should improve its compliance with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims.**

**In particular a person who reports a crime to the police has the right to receive written confirmation of the allegation. This should include basic details of the offence, a crime reference number and the contact details of the officer dealing with the case. We found that the force was not routinely providing this.**

### The force has mandated the College of Policing’s Victim’s Code of Practice (VCoP) NCALT training package be completed by the entire workforce - 99.8% of the workforce have completed this. The force’s Total Victim and Witness Care group have internal VCoP tracking document which maps all standard practices and any exceptional activity that assists with VCoP adherence, to the appropriate Code Rights. As standard, Durham do not automatically send a letter of written confirmation of a reported crime to all victims, based on the high cost of doing so; as an alternative the Force uses a recently re-formatted and updated Victim of Crime leaflet which is given to every victim, either as a paper copy when officers attend incidents or via email where victim requests this or where the incident is handled by the Virtual Investigation Team.

**AFI 3- The force should improve its compliance with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims.**

**In particular a victim of crime has the right to be offered support. This includes an assessment of whether they are entitled to receive enhanced rights. We found that very few officers were aware of this right and victim needs assessments were not being routinely completed.**

### Integrated Victim & Witness Support Hubs are established across the main localities in Force and ensure that all appropriate victims are initially referred into VCAS who assess and triage the victim as per individual requirements. In terms of enhanced rights and Victim Needs Assessments (VNAS), work is underway to build in a VNA question set at the front-end of a Victim Care log. In the interim, a QR code has been created that officers can scan with their smart devices that opens an ‘Initial Victim Needs Assessment’ set of ‘click through’ screens, containing bullet point instructions and prompts to consider when recording a VNA and where to record the details along with key video briefings around victim care and victim support.

### Moreover, as PCC I have commissioned several Victim Champion posts. These roles have helped to give a greater voice to victims of crime and anti-social behaviour and allow for a much greater recognition of the importance of lived experiences and how they can be applied to policies to improve the victims experience. Additionally, Operation Soteria Bluestone, will help enhance the Force’s understanding of rape and serious sexual offence victims’ support needs and the pilot undertaken by the DII and VCAS, around the unintended victims of indecent image offences is being implemented across the organisation.

### The force’s standard victim contact is carried out using Contact Contract information that should be agreed at first point of contact and/or when any pertinent information to the investigation becomes available. Investigation scrutiny and review work ensures Victim Logs are quality checked and remedial actions created when needed. 7-Day Ring Backs ensure victims have received all necessary and appropriate information. Victim support can be offered at any of these contact points, where it was not taken/offered at the initial point of offer. Over the next period it will be important for the force to consider how they can enhance the appropriateness of referrals to bespoke victim services.

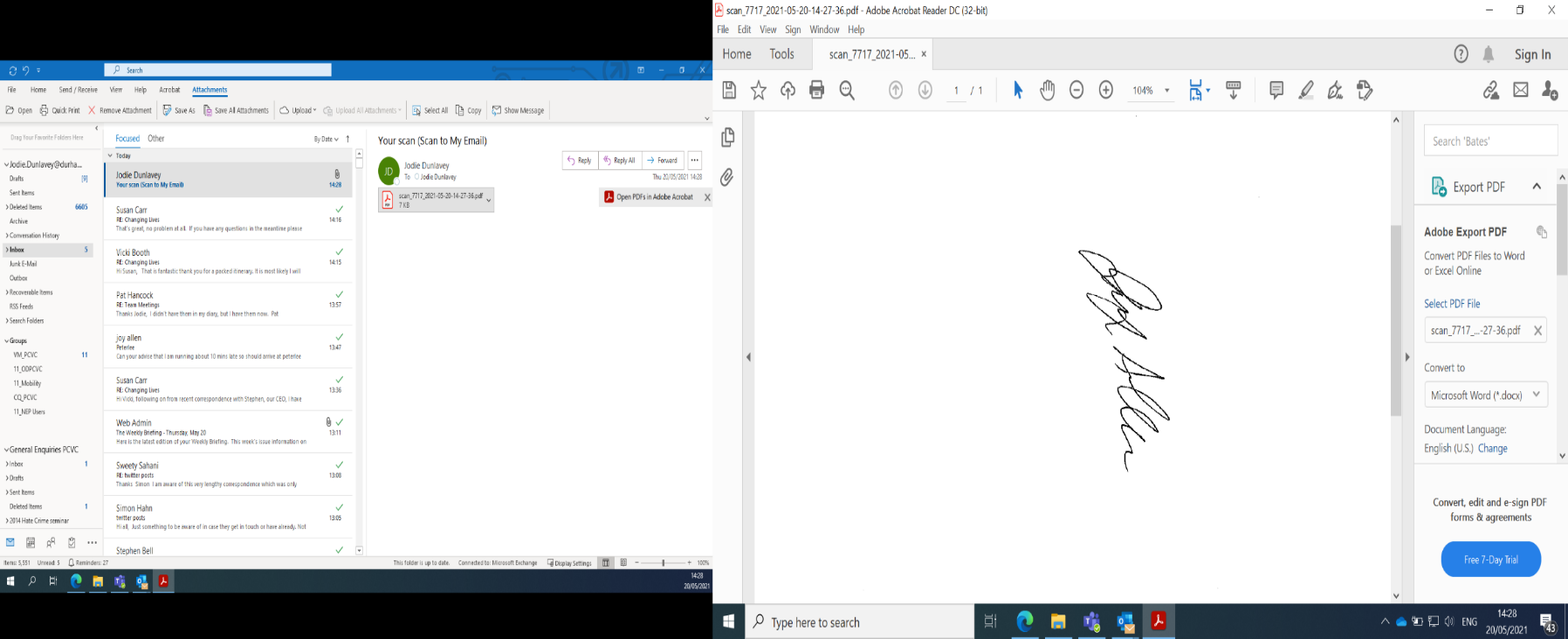
**AFI 4- The force should make sure that its policy on managing registered sex offenders is clear to neighbourhood officers. And that it can assure itself that the policy is being applied consistently.**

### The model for Registered Sex Offender (RSO) management of medium and low risk RSO consists of experienced Public Protection Unit (PPU) staff, who are Active Risk Management System (ARMS) assessors, managing Neighbourhood Officers around the effective delivery of RSO management. This model has been augmented through more Neighbourhood Officers being trained specifically in Management of Sexual or Violent Offender ARMS. The force has also increased their number of ARMS assessors and have implemented a programme of continuous professional development (CPD) for Neighbourhood Officers which is aimed at strengthening the consistency of the management of RSOs. Some of the areas which have been covered during CPD have been digital investigation, police powers, and National Probation Service programmes.

### The benefits of this approach include allowing RSO managers in the PPU to focus on very high, high, and “top end” medium risk offenders. It enables joined up local policing where the risks are evaluated in local context and allows Neighbourhood Officers to address offenders with their full knowledge of the local community. The initial academic evaluation of this approach has highlighted an increase in intelligence and arrests following the adoption of this model.

I am also copying this letter to Andy Cooke, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

Yours sincerely,



**Joy Allen**

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Darlington and Durham**

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*The Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham is an accredited Living Wage Employer with the Living Wage Foundation*

