**west midlands
police and crime
commissioner**

**STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
18th July 2017**

**Preventing and Detecting Crimes Involving
Vulnerable People Perpetrated by Police
Officers and Staff - Update**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To identify and report on learning, and the implementation of organisational change, arising from instances where police officers and staff have used their position for inappropriate purposes, specifically the exploitation of individuals in a vulnerable position through their personal circumstances. This report is an update from the report of 3rd January 2017 and provides details regarding current and proposed activity.

INTRODUCTION

2. West Midlands Police (WMP) recognises there are a small number of police officers and staff who abuse and exploit vulnerable individuals whom they have come into contact with as part of their role. There is a public expectation that West Midlands Police do everything possible to remove the risk posed by this behaviour.

3. This report is an update on how the force acts to prevent, predict and investigate instances where police officers and police staff use or seek to use their position to enable crimes or inappropriate activity involving adults or children in a vulnerable position through their personal circumstances.

4. The force Professional Standards Department (PSD) has created a plan to address these concerns. This plan, together with a delivery plan, and updates are operationally sensitive and are put forward for the closed session of the meeting.

5. PSD are currently subject to a business transformation review which will provide greater capability in terms of identifying and predicting abuse of authority.

PREVENTION

Vetting

6. New recruits to WMP undergo rigorous vetting checks including checks with the police force where they have been resident for the last five years. Additionally, specific posts, departments and roles are subject to enhanced vetting checks. The Force is currently in the process of re-vetting staff who have been in the organisation for over 10 years. The Public Protection Unit is a priority department for this re-vetting as is the Firearms unit.

Learning and Development

7. WMP recognises that learning and development plays a pivotal role in setting the standards of professional behaviour. Professional Standards Department has an enhanced working relationship with learning and development with both recognising the importance of a close working relationship. All supervisors received an input from PSD in 2016.

8. All of the local and departmental appropriate authorities (conduct decision makers) have been given an input on the tactical plan, and have been tasked with providing a local input to further raise awareness.

9. Learning and Development are actively identifying opportunities to include the work to combat sexual predators in their current training schedules.

Force Values and Culture of Responsibility

10. PSD supports a culture of responsibility by facilitating a confidential reporting line where officers and staff can report information anonymously. Working with colleagues from Corporate Communications this line encourages more reporting from colleagues regarding behaviour of concern.

11. WMP recognises that colleagues should have the confidence to report inappropriate behaviour without fear of reprisal for themselves. The whistle-blowing policy has been written to ensure officers/staff who report concerns are afforded the appropriate protection and will delivered by the People and Organisational Development dept during the Summer.

Inappropriate Relationship Strategic Plan and Activity Tracker

12. The plan setting out the planned activity and delivery is included for the closed session of the meeting.

13. Engagement with other Forces regarding their response to abuse of authority, interventions used and best practice has taken place. This work is on-going and good open lines of communication now exist between WMP and other forces. This has provided tangible benefits regarding prevention activity but also investigative strategy. WMP will be seeking to formalise this network to ensure best practice continues.

14. We have adapted a process used by Gloucestershire, which places a greater focus on the offender as a whole when looking at suspects, and we are looking at innovative scoping processes used in Merseyside and Staffordshire.

15. An integrity health check for supervisors has been created regarding inappropriate relationships, professional boundaries, business interests and notifiable associations. This forms part of an annual review that all supervisors have with members of their staff. The expectations of the organisation regarding professional boundaries are made clear and staff will be expected to sign and agree this. The appropriate authorities were given a briefing on the integrity health checks in June and will now implement them.

16. Engagement with the Public Protection Unit (PPU) and partner agencies to support our work regarding inappropriate relationships has been well received. This is on-going work but has included meeting with other agencies who form part of the Rape and Serious Sexual Offence stakeholder group. Creating a third party referral mechanism for agencies to refer cases of abuse of authority will increase confidence amongst our vulnerable communities. This will be a confidential reporting mechanism via a support worker straight to our Counter Corruption Unit (CCU).

17. A specific communications strategy was launched in June titled 'Knowing Your Boundaries'. This involved a variety of communication material to emphasise the importance of knowing and maintaining professional boundaries, warning signs to look out for with colleagues and protecting themselves from vulnerabilities.

18. Dilemma of the month; a dilemma regarding a scenario that an officer may find themselves in regarding inappropriate authority and a range of options to consider

19. Respondents detail their thoughts on a forum which is a good way of opening up difficult subjects to debate

20. Colleagues' comments and thought processes support the ethos of doing the right thing and challenging behaviour of others. The Police Federation give a perspective which is clearly emphasising the importance of maintaining professional boundaries

Specialist Skills and technology

21. PSD have a wide range of investigators within the department who have a variety of specialist skills and knowledge. However we also recognise the changing demand of investigations, particularly around vulnerable people. To ensure that PSD remains alive to this we are actively seeking new investigators and specialist investigators who have the ability to navigate through the new internal and external working practices. Additionally, when we seek to recruit CCU staff and PSD investigators, specific investigative and specialist skills are sought. For example, PPU officers have the experience of working with vulnerable people and are able to recognise the uniqueness of these cases and are best placed to support these investigations.

22. PSD have a good relationship and high level of engagement with our PPU and those in other Forces. There are cases investigated criminally by other departments where PSD are able to offer support, advice and investigative strategy to assist in the successful outcome of their cases. Ensuring PSD have the skillset to achieve this is pivotal and is reflected in our current staff skillset and considered in all recruitment processes.

23. Lessons Learned and identified from specific cases are disseminated to the relevant department and also published on our internal web site. This will become more formalised with the Prevention and Intervention Team identifying themes, trends and will collate and disseminate organisational learning.

24. New technologies shared in force are discussed with Counter Corruption ahead of launch to ensure that they are protected against misuse. Clear usage policy outlines acceptable and unacceptable uses of the IT equipment provided, including personal usage.

25. Lawful business monitoring takes place to ensure our systems are being used appropriately.

PREDICTION

General

26. WMP are able to extract data from our IT systems us to identify people who may be abusing their authority. We will improve these processes as a result of the business transformation work. We will also overlay this information with POD to ensure we target our efforts at the right officers.

27. WMP is working with an academic institute to conduct historical case analysis to inform the tactical plan.

28. Once detailed analysis of cases has taken place, PSD will be better informed to target our activity to identify or predict officers and staff engaged in inappropriate activity. We will create a risk matrix to identify vulnerability and key characteristics and proactively prevent this from escalating.

29. Intervention methods will include targeting vulnerable or high risk teams/departments where specific training and support can be offered. The emphasis will also be on identifying any warning or trigger points for future reference.

INVESTIGATION

30. Investigating allegations where information suggests that a police officer or member of police staff is engaged in inappropriate or criminal activity with an adult or children in a vulnerable position through their personal circumstances, is done initially by PSD. The majority of these cases are independently investigated by the IPCC as they are classed as serious corruption.

31. However in a number of cases a criminal offence is investigated by either another police force or another department such as PPU, involving one of our officers or staff or. As detailed previously, PSD work closely with the investigators to assist and support those investigations and then where appropriate undertake a misconduct investigation.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS
There are no legal implications identified at this time

RECOMMENDATIONS
The Board is asked to take note of the contents of the report submitted.

T/Chief Supt Mark Payne
Head of PSD