



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
3rd January 2017

**Preventing and detecting crimes involving
vulnerable people perpetrated by police
officers and staff**

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.

INTRODUCTION

2. 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. The public have an expectation that everything possible is done to remove the risk posed by similar behaviour.
3. This report covers 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. Measures are in place currently within WMP and Professional Standards Department to tackle this issue. In order to keep pace and reduce this trend, various covert and overt methods have been adopted and some are being developed. Some of which are technology based. The Professional Standards Department has reviewed its current working practices to identify any out dated, overburdened or inefficient processes.
5. There are three main areas of consideration for this report: Prevention, Prediction and Investigation. This is not an exhaustive list but will cover all areas concerned.

PREVENTION

Vetting

6. New recruits to WMP undergo rigorous vetting checks including checks with the police force where the person currently resides and over 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.

7. Contracted staff from agencies are also subject to our vetting checks and are required to pass these even for temporary contracts.
8. Transferees from other forces are subject of our robust vetting checks within WMP.

Learning and Development

9. 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.
10. A number of training sessions are delivered by Professional Standards Department to specialist staff such as firearms, Operational Support Unit and Force Contact. These sessions are designed to break down barriers with PSD, encourage greater responsibility of individuals regarding inappropriate behaviour and conduct matters. Additionally reassurance regarding current referral methods, whistleblowing and welfare support are also covered. Relevant and recent case studies are discussed with the group; the subject of inappropriate relationships is covered to encourage an open and honest debate and consideration of appropriate boundaries
11. Over the last 12 months all first and second line supervisors have received mandatory training delivered by PSD staff. These sessions emphasised the importance of their role in identifying and challenging inappropriate behaviour and attitudes. WMP recognise that our supervisors play a fundamental role in instilling the Standards of Professional Behaviour and recognising possible precursor predatory behaviour.
12. All new police officer recruits are given detailed inputs regarding the Code of Ethics and this is emphasised throughout their student officer training. PSD staff also deliver a bespoke training session detailing the Standards of Professional Behaviour, use of social media and inappropriate relationships. Specific cases are referred to so students can understand what is acceptable and recognising when themselves or a colleague are putting themselves in a vulnerable position.

Force Values and Culture of Responsibility

WMP has recently renewed its Force Values in 2016 through extensive consultation with all roles and ranks within the organisation. This has a particular emphasis on doing the right thing: **“I am courageous and fair”**

I stand up for the right thing

I challenge unreasonable and discriminatory behaviour

I make the right decisions, however tough they are

I want to work in a diverse team

13. The Force Values were delivered as part of the changes of 2020 programme of change; communications and marketing via Roadshows, forums, social media, internal marketing ensure that all officers understand their responsibilities regarding reporting improper behaviour.

14. PSD supports a culture of responsibility by facilitating a confidential reporting line where officer and staff can report information anonymously. This will soon be changed to a vulnerability line to encourage more reporting from colleagues regarding behaviour of concern.
15. WMP recognises that colleagues should have the confidence to report inappropriate behaviour without fear of reprisal for themselves. The Whistle Blowing policy is been written to ensure officers/staff who report concerns are afforded the appropriate protection. WMP recognise the importance of good communication throughout the organisation with regards to supervisors and colleagues identifying signs of worrying behaviour.
16. This is re-enforced through training and continual professional development. Additionally PSD have a number of communication strategies to assist with this:
17. Dilemma of the month; a different dilemma regarding a scenario that an officer may find themselves in and a range of options to consider
18. Respondents detail their thoughts on a forum which is a good way of opening up difficult subjects to debate
19. Colleagues comments and thought processes support the ethos of doing the right thing and challenging behaviour of others
20. Future work regarding an appropriate performance framework for supervisors to refer to could assist in identifying suspicious behaviour/activity.

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 prevent and respond to cases of abuse of authority.
22. Lessons Learned and identified from specific cases are disseminated to the relevant department and also published on our internal web site.
23. WMP follow the NPCC vetting policy and as such staff are vetted appropriately before they gain access to any police information. All staff must also complete College of Policing training on lawful handling of information before they receive their logon. Once generic access is granted, access to additional systems such as FLINTS, and Crimes is given after appropriate training. Systems use is audited.
24. New technologies such as mobile devices and the Data Driven insight are discussed with Counter Corruption Unit (CCU) and Information Services to ensure they are protected from misuse. Combing technology and clear policy management will greatly assist in ensuring that police employees are aware of what the organisation considers to be acceptable and unacceptable uses of the IT equipment provided, including personal usage. This will reduce the time taken investigating minor misuse and allow the CCU to concentrate on police employees using mobile devices to commit offences against vulnerable people.

PREDICTION

General

25. PSD and CCU will be investing more time in identifying a variety of key characteristics that are related to police employees who commit or attempt to commit offences against vulnerable people.
26. A risk matrix will be designed and a benchmark will be set that defines a person(s) who may offend.
27. Intervention measures will be put in place ranging from management discussions and role changes to employing covert methods.

Investigation

28. 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.
29. Where possible WMP works closely with the IPCC in support of their investigations and offer specialist support where needed. Further work is to be done to ensure both the IPCC and WMP have the required skillset and knowledge to fully support these complex investigations and will seek to enhance this through the growth bid.
30. Abuse of authority features in the PSD Strategic Assessment.
31. The CCU will provide wider PSD with training to help them understand how to make a referral and bid for covert resources to progress investigations of this nature.
32. CCU will seek to meet local forces who have progressed on these issues to understand what preventative and predictive actions they have taken.
33. Thresholds for Covert Investigation – CCU will consider all cases of abuse of authority where traditional investigative procedures have failed to negate or corroborate criminal activity.
34. WMP are in the process of reviewing the CCU and its resources, including the IT software available. One solution sought is to enhance WMP's ability to identify appropriate indicators of possible corruption, including abuse of authority. This solution should enable PSD to launch targeted, proactive investigations.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

35. None Apparent

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

36. None Apparent

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Assistant Chief Constable Alex Murray