

Equality Statement 2013-17

Fifth six-monthly update

As I come to my final update against my Equality Statement, it is time to look back on the three-and-a-half years I have spent as Norfolk's first elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and assess progress.

As your PCC, I am committed to promoting equality of opportunity, eliminating discrimination, victimisation and vulnerability, and improving community relations.

A lot of good work has been done over my term in office which has contributed to the objectives set out in my Equality Statement. Here is my assessment of some of the highlights, along with a look ahead to the future.



Stephen Bett, Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk

Equality statement objective 1:

Ensure my commitment to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relations is reflected in the aims of all relevant policies, strategies and plans

The cornerstone of every PCC's work is their Police and Crime Plan. The plan sets out the Commissioner's priorities, including how they will reduce crime and disorder in the local area, how they will support victims and what they have decided, in consultation with communities, their police force should be focusing on.

Promoting equality and tackling discrimination are priorities for me as Norfolk's PCC and, as such, I felt it was right and proper that my commitment to making a difference in these areas be obvious at the highest level – within my Police and Crime Plan.

With this plan as the foundation for all policies, strategies, projects and initiatives coming out of my office, I have strived to ensure equality is built into everything we do.

We have launched funding rounds to support local organisations working with minority groups and vulnerable members of our communities. We have made a shared commitment to equality an important measure in how we commission goods and services, and work with partners. We have worked with our communities to understand diverse community needs and taken steps to ensure those needs shape the services delivered.

Over the term, we have restructured, reviewed, refreshed and reinvented – necessary in a world that moves as fast as policing and crime do - but what has stayed constant has been that commitment. Could we do more – always. But there have been some solid achievements of which I am proud.

Equality statement objective 2:

Make sure that the organisations to which I allocate grants and the providers from whom I commission services share this commitment and reflect it in all relevant areas of their work

Commissioning. A fundamental part of the PCC role.

The laws that introduced PCCs gave us powers to commission goods and services which would contribute to reducing crime and supporting victims, meeting local priorities and community needs.

This area of business has been more of a slow-grow than others - with an initial focus on maintaining the status quo to avoid gaps emerging in the services relied upon by victims of crime, offenders, those with complex needs, and the vulnerable.

But thanks to input from partners and communities, the implementation of a robust commissioning strategy and the growing skill and expertise of my team, we have moved to a position of allocating grants guided by an evidence-based assessment of local need.

Major projects we have commissioned include a referral and assessment service for all victims of crime, delivered by Victim Support. This sits alongside specialist support services for victims of crimes including domestic abuse and sexual abuse, provided by local organisations such as Leeway and Sue Lambert Trust.

We have also launched funding rounds totalling more than £700,000 to support the local grassroots organisations working in the following areas:

- Tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Supporting victims and preventing victimisation
- Working with offenders to prevent reoffending and rehabilitate offenders
- Supporting people with mental health issues and personality disorder to prevent offending and victimisation
- Supporting people with alcohol and substance misuse issues to prevent offending and victimisation
- Working with young people to help them stay clear of crime
- Supporting minority communities and improving community relations.

But the biggest test of our commissioning capabilities came in late 2015 when the Home Office enlisted our help in allocating almost £5 million in national funding. We oversaw two funds established to support survivors of childhood sexual abuse, allocating grants to organisations across England and Wales who had seen increased demand for their services as a result of the child abuse inquiry.

More than 70 organisations received a share of that Home Office funding, and we have since been working with PCCs across the country to share best practice as they take over this support funding for their local areas in 2016/17.

Equality statement objective 3:

Actively engage with Norfolk's communities and work to develop a greater understanding of their needs, ensuring they are taken account of in the policing service delivered in the county. I will be supported in doing this by the Norfolk Independent Advisory Group, Disability Advisory Forum and Norfolk Police Independent Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Advisory Forum

Consultation

As Norfolk's PCC, it is my job to make policing and crime reduction decisions which not only meet the needs of our county but also take into account the views of its residents. My Police and Crime Plan – both the original and the refreshed version published midway through my term of office - is based on the issues that have the biggest impact on our county along with the crime and policing issues you told me concern you the most.

You have also taken the time to share your views and influence other key decisions I have made such as how much local tax payers contribute to funding their policing service, and how low-level crime and anti-social behaviour should be dealt with to ensure victims have both a voice and a choice in how they

get justice.

We are always trying to make opportunities to have your say varied, taking account of the needs and preferences of our communities so as many people as possible are able to get involved. This year's consultation on the police budget and Council Tax precept got the biggest response yet. From people taking our online survey, to those calling, writing or emailing my office, attendees at the public budget events in Norwich and King's Lynn, and the people my team got to speak to out and about in Great Yarmouth, 2,500 views were shared.

Advisory Groups

As always, I remain ever-grateful to the dedicated community volunteers who make up the policing advisory groups which provide a barometer of public opinion, highlighting the key issues on which we need to know or do more. I am particularly proud of their resilience – there have been a lot of changes over the last three years.

The Independent Advisory Group continues to meet regularly, with meetings administered and supported by my team. We are currently partway through a recruitment drive, and we have welcomed six new members to the group to share their views and experiences of crime and policing with the aim of improving policing services for everyone. We have refreshed the group's Terms of Reference, moved the annual general meeting from January to September to dovetail with the PCC's annual report, and invited the Chair of the Disability Advisory Forum to sit on the IAG to improve links between the two groups.

The IAG continues to review new draft policies for the Constabulary. Members have also been involved in a number of projects, including giving feedback to police on THRIVE (a control room call-handling project assessing threat, risk and harm) and a member actively participated in reviewing calls to the control room. The Group has also provided its input into the Norfolk 2020 review which relates to police budgets and times of austerity, and members have also been consulted on work to deliver a new police website for Norfolk.

Going forward, we are taking a much-needed look at how we ensure we are making the most of the insight, experience and skills that the members offer. We could get much smarter with this.

The Disability Advisory Forum, whose meetings are administered and supported by Norfolk Police, continue to discuss their experiences of crime and accessing policing services at their quarterly meetings. Members provide valuable advice to my office and to the Constabulary, and have also had great success working in smaller groups to support specific projects, such as officer training and the Safer Places scheme.

I was delighted to have two members of the Forum working with my team on an easy read version of my Police and Crime Plan and annual report. Sara and Robert linked us in with Opening Doors – a user led organisation run by people with learning difficulties – and the questions users asked us and feedback and advice they gave enabled us to make two lengthy and complex documents much easier for a wider audience to read and understand. A big thank you to Sara, Robert and Opening Doors for their help.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Forum, whose meetings are also administered and supported by Norfolk Police, has taken a new direction. Norfolk Police met with local LGBT people to explore their support for regular Forum meetings continuing, but the feedback they received was that ongoing regular contact with Norfolk Police's Gay Liaison Officers (GLOs) was felt to be of more interest and benefit to them. On the basis of that feedback, the regular meetings of the Forum have ceased for the time-being. Norfolk Police will no doubt keep this under review and take further action should the feedback from the LGBT community change.

I am pleased to say that one of the members of the LGBT Forum remains an IAG member, and we were pleased to be able to help fund their attendance at a recent Stonewall conference in London.

Equality statement objective 4:

Support victims and witnesses of crime, and those who are vulnerable to becoming offenders or victims. As the voice of the victim, I will lend my voice to theirs or speak up on their behalf to ensure they are heard

We have just had police inspection season and, on the whole, the reports from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) made for very positive reading. I was particularly pleased to see Norfolk Police rated 'good' for protecting the vulnerable and supporting victims. But as Norfolk's PCC, my job goes further than just ensuring the police are doing a good job – I am also responsible for making sure victims and witnesses of crime in our county can access the support services they need to cope and recover from what they have experienced.

Working with Victim Support, I have provided a victim assessment and referral service for Norfolk, giving victims of crime an initial point of contact from which to access specialist or non-specialist support. I am also supporting local specialist organisations to provide services which help victims of specific crimes, children and young people affected by crime, and those victims who need support while going through the court process.

For some victims though, the 'traditional' route of seeing the perpetrator go to court and receive a punishment is not all they feel they need to get justice. For people affected by crime, it can be difficult living with unanswered questions, and, often, the only one who can answer their questions is the person who did them harm. The launch of the joint Restorative Justice (RJ) Service for Norfolk and Suffolk is giving victims that opportunity to meet with the offender in a safe environment, ask questions and talk about how they have been affected by what happened. While this may not appeal to everyone, for some people it can have a huge impact on how they cope with and recover from what they have experienced.

We have launched a number of funding rounds to help support the local organisations who play their part in keeping Norfolk safe, reducing crime and supporting victims. One of the many benefits of doing this was that I got to visit a good number of these organisations to find out more about what they do, and I met some of the people who rely on their services. One such organisation I visited was a domestic abuse support group in Sprowston called Dawn's New Horizon. For such a small organisation, Dawn's New Horizon has a significant impact in its local area supporting those affected by domestic abuse. On my first visit, I heard from its founder Lorraine about the issues the organisation was having with its website and how those problems were stopping victims being able to access their information, advice and support services. It gave me great pleasure to be able to put Lorraine in contact with my team who worked with her on a new website which launched in March 2016. I hope it serves them well and I wish Lorraine and all her very valued volunteers all the best for future.

In order to be able to provide support services which meet victims' needs, we need to properly understand those needs and the impact crime has on our communities. For example, we have been working on building up a bigger picture of domestic abuse in Norfolk, and the evidence shows that it affects all genders, ages, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, religions, physical and mental abilities. The evidence also shows that some groups feel less able to come forward and seek help to stop the abuse. This information will form the basis of a needs assessment which, going forward, can be used to commission services which meet the needs of groups identified as being less likely to report with the aim of helping them move away from abuse.

When we talk about supporting the vulnerable, we don't often put the people who commit crime in that category, but there are a number of factors which make people 'vulnerable' to committing crime, from

being homeless or jobless, to having been a victim of crime themselves.

Repeat offenders are responsible for a significant amount of the crime we have here and, for many, the difficulty they face in finding employment can be a huge barrier to leaving their offending past behind them. I have been calling on Norfolk's business community to play their part in keeping the county safe by breaking down barriers to employment for ex-offenders. We're asking 100 organisations to offer a positive opportunity – work experience, training, an apprenticeship or a job – to someone with a criminal conviction. We're well on our way with many local organisations pledging their support to give ex-offenders a second chance and reduce the likelihood they will go on to commit more crime.

We are also leading the way in improving support for female offenders. More than 4,000 women were prosecuted by courts in Norfolk during 2014, and without the right support it's likely that a considerable number of those women will go on to reoffend, so we have to understand what makes these women vulnerable to committing crime.

Statistics show that, in Norfolk, 23% of police detainees that are women have also been victims of crime – most commonly as victims of low level violence and domestic abuse. Female offenders are twice as likely to report experiencing abuse in their childhoods, twice as likely to commit crime to support someone's drug habit, and 2.5 times as likely to need help with mental health issues when compared with male offenders. These are vulnerable women becoming entrenched in offending behaviour which has a huge impact on their children, families and the wider community, and I am pleased to say that with the help of funding from the Ministry of Justice and Government Equalities Office, we are working to offer the help they need to address the causes and consequences of what they are doing.

We have also worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to deliver welfare reform training to 50 practitioners working with people with criminal convictions in the community. Not being able to manage their finances and being in debt can make people vulnerable to committing more crime. As a result of this training, those who took part have a better awareness of how welfare reforms and, particularly, Universal Credit will impact on offenders, and are better prepared for offering finance, benefit and debt information and support to those they work with.

And, in partnership with the Norfolk Police diversity team, we provided training to organisations working with people with criminal convictions on how to spot the signs they might be being radicalised. Workshops to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) are part of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy and help participants to think about who might be vulnerable to radicalisation, better understand why some people are able to influence and manipulate others to commit crime, recognise when a vulnerable individual needs help and be clear on what help and support looks like locally.

Equality statement objective 5:

Continue to run Norfolk's Independent Custody Visiting Scheme to provide reassurance that detainees are treated fairly and in accordance with their legal rights and entitlements

Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) are community volunteers who visit Police Investigation Centres (PICs) in the county, unannounced and in pairs, to check on the welfare of detained persons and the conditions in which they are held. They assist me in fulfilling my responsibility to ensure that policing in Norfolk is carried out fairly, in accordance with the rules, and with respect for the human rights of those coming into contact with the police.

At present there are 20 ICVs operating across the four panels of Aylsham, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn and Wymondham. Between 1 May 2015 and 29 February 2016, a total of 172 visits were made. 1,182 people were detained in custody at the time of those visits and 79% of those available to see received an ICV visit (reasons for non-availability for a visit include being in an interview, being seen by a healthcare professional, with a solicitor or asleep). Whilst offered a visit, there is no obligation for

a detained person to speak with an ICV.

ICVs have noted that detainees have been cared for appropriately but they have, as a result of their conversations with detainees, recorded requests for blankets, food or drink, reading material and access to a healthcare professional for medication, which were raised with custody staff and subsequently dealt with. No issues of serious harm or threat have been reported in this period.

The next ICV annual report is currently being drafted and will be published in April 2016. A paper was also tabled at a meeting of the Norfolk Police and Crime Panel (the body responsible for holding me to account for my work as your PCC) for the first time to brief panel members on the statutory duties around ICVs and how the Norfolk scheme is operating.

The ICVs in Norfolk have had a number of training opportunities with a joint training event with Suffolk's ICVs being hosted here in Norfolk for our volunteers to receive updates from the national Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA) and hear from operational police officers on developments with the new IT system ATHENA.

The scheme administrator role was reviewed last summer and a part-time dedicated resource was recruited in September 2015 to ensure that all matters pertaining to ICVs in Norfolk are prioritised. I was very pleased to join the scheme administrator in presenting awards to two of our long-serving volunteers, Rick and Eric, in November 2015 and we have also been working to recruit new volunteers to the scheme.

The commitment and enthusiasm of the ICVs in Norfolk is substantial, and my continued thanks go to all those that give up their time freely in support of Independent Custody Visiting in Norfolk.

Equality statement objective 6:

Be accessible, open and transparent, publishing equality information on my website and welcoming feedback at any time on my approach to meeting my equality duties

This remains a key focus for us as an office and we are committed to not only complying with the legal requirements placed upon us, but also to exploring and taking advantage of opportunities to proactively publish information through our website and other communication channels. Our dedication to being open and transparent has been rewarded with a Transparency quality mark awarded by CoPaCC – a national body which monitors PCCs.

Acknowledging that awareness of the PCC role is still not as high as it should be, my office has produced a 60-second video which explains the role and key responsibilities. This has been welcomed by a number of PCC offices around the country who are also using it and communicating those key messages.

The Committee for Standards in Public Life published its final report into police accountability and leadership in June, making a number of recommendations which my office is taking forward, and the team is also finalising work on reviewing its management information strategy.

Equality statement objective 7:

Monitor and scrutinise Norfolk Constabulary's compliance with its equality duties, holding the Chief Constable to account as appropriate. Among other things, I will look at the Constabulary's approach to tackling hate crime, how it uses its Stop and Search powers, how satisfied different community groups are with the police service they receive, what complaints are being made against the Force, and how the Constabulary promotes workforce diversity and recruits, retains, promotes and trains its officers and staff

One of the ways we formally hold the Chief Constable to account is via our bi-monthly Police Accountability Forum meetings. These are public meetings which anyone is welcome to attend, and all the information discussed is published on my website ahead of each meeting. We ask that anyone with specific needs in terms of accessing meetings lets us know in advance so we can take reasonable steps to meet those needs. We also send live tweets from the meetings so those people unable to attend can get a flavour of the information being presented and discussions had.

At recent meetings, we have had a number of public papers presented by the Chief Constable and senior officers on new areas of business such as developments in criminal justice (court video links for vulnerable victims, out of court disposals and projects running in our custody facilities to reduce reoffending), and we continue to consider regular reports on police finance, performance and equality and diversity (which includes, among other things, progress against police equality objectives, stop and search, and hate crime data).

Two big projects have become regular standing items on the agenda for these public meetings – one being the ATHENA project which is the implementation of a one-stop police IT system. Since its launch there have been numerous issues with the system and, while the Chief Constable has given his reassurance that the force is on top of the problems and finding solutions, this must remain on the PCC radar going forward to ensure that data quality issues are being resolved and that all potential operational impacts, particularly those affecting victims and the vulnerable, are identified and mitigated.

The other major project currently in progress is the development and delivery of a new Norfolk Police website. Not just keen to see the new website provide value for money, I am also interested in how the new website will meet user needs and reduce demand from calls to the control room. The Independent Advisory Group has already been consulted on proposals and the look and feel of the website, and more in-depth user testing is currently under way with the initial prototype site. Again this is something we need to be closely monitoring to ensure the specific needs of Norfolk's communities are considered and met in the new design, functionality and information provided on the site.

We continue to meet regularly with members of the Norfolk Police diversity team to discuss recent developments or concerns, and also take part in the equality board meetings that the Constabulary hold with community representatives to update on progress against equality duties.

My team has also been linking in with the police Professional Standards Department (PSD) more recently around their complaint reduction strategy. We now have regular stakeholder meetings with PSD, the mental health specialists who work in the police control room and operational officers to discuss themes and trends in complaints and to ensure that appropriate information is being shared and the needs of the complainant prioritised. This is a good first step and will lay solid foundations moving forward with impending changes to legislation around complaints to be enacted in the new Policing and Crime Bill after November 2016.

Equality statement objective 8:

Strive to bring countywide co-ordination to the work of Norfolk's public and voluntary sectors in advancing equality and nurturing diversity in our county

I am very grateful to my deputy Jenny McKibben for the work she has done in chairing Norfolk's Community Relations and Equality Board (CREB). There has been some good partnership work come out of the leadership and coordination provided by the Board, such as the Hate Free Norfolk campaign. With the pre-PCC-election period upon us, Jenny will no longer be chairing the Board, but I hope to see it thrive in the future with Norfolk's public and voluntary sectors showing even more commitment to working together to advance equality and nurture diversity in our county.

How you can have your say

I welcome your views on my equality work. If you have any suggestions about how I should be approaching my equality duties, please get in touch. If you would like the information within this statement in an alternative format, please contact me with your request.

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