

Stock take of implementation of the Rape Action Plan 2002

Results Report September 2005

Introduction

1. In 2001-02, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) conducted a joint inspection into the investigation and prosecution of cases involving allegations of rape. The report, published in April 2002, raised serious concerns regarding levels of victim satisfaction, high attrition rates and low conviction rates in cases of rape.
2. In response the government published a Rape Action Plan in July 2002. It accepted virtually all of the recommendations put forward by the HMIC / HMCPPI report and made 18 recommendations relating to practical measures to improve:
3. The investigation of rape cases by the police;
 - Guidance and training for both the police and prosecutors;
 - The quality of advice, decision making, case preparation and presentation at court by prosecutors; and
 - The treatment of victims and witnesses in cases involving allegations of rape.
4. Implementation of these recommendations has been ongoing since the publication of the Rape Action Plan. There has, however, been no formal audit of progress on implementation, meaning that it is not known where progress has been made and where gaps remain.
5. A two stage process to review progress on the way that allegations of rape are investigated and prosecuted was agreed in February 2005. The first stage was the present stock take, which would assess progress specifically on the measures set out in the Rape Action Plan. It was agreed by the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors' Group that this would inform a second stage – a follow-up inspection to the 2002 inspection, to be carried out in the first quarter of 2006 by HMIC and HMCPPI.
6. The first stage of this process has now been completed, and this report sets out the findings of the stock take. The report is intended for the use of HMIC and HMCPPI, in order to assist them in selecting issues and any geographical areas which warrant further investigation. In the mean time, the report will be used as the basis for feedback to police forces and CPS areas about where their relative strengths and weaknesses lie, and about how any gaps can be addressed.
7. This report is made up of four main sections:

- This covering report, summarising key findings and drawing conclusions
 - A report by ACPO on the results of the police force survey
 - A report by the CPS policy directorate on the CPS area survey
 - A report on the survey of key stakeholders
8. In May 2005, a working group, chaired by the Home Office, was convened with responsibility for undertaking the stock take of the Rape Action Plan. The group included representatives at official level from the following organisations:
- Home Office
 - CPS Policy Directorate
 - Department for Constitutional Affairs
 - Association of Chief Police Officers
 - Metropolitan Police Service
 - National Centre for Policing Excellence
 - Forensic Science Service
 - HMIC
 - HMCPSI
9. In consultation with HMIC and HMCPSI it was agreed that the data for the stock take would be drawn from two key surveys:
- A self report survey of police forces on the investigative elements of the Rape Action Plan, administered by ACPO;
 - A Self-report survey of CPS areas on the prosecution elements of the Rape Action Plan, administered by the CPS Policy Directorate.
10. In addition, a survey of key stakeholders was conducted in order to obtain views of the impact of the measures in the Rape Action Plan from a victim perspective.
11. Detailed information about the surveys and their findings is provided in the individual survey reports which make up the other sections of this report.
12. The surveys were sent out in June 2005 and results collated in July and August. Responses to the CPS survey were received from every CPS area. Responses to the ACPO survey were received from all but one police force. The stakeholder survey was sent to 100 Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (VCOs), Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and key academics. 27 responses were received, including three from umbrella organisations, in two cases based on input from their member organisations and in one case on input from survivors of rape accessing the organisation's website.
13. The results of the three surveys were considered by the working group, which has agreed the contents of this report.

Limitations

14. The self-report nature of the ACPO and CPS surveys presents an obvious limitation in that the answers cannot be verified by the authors of this report. Moreover, whilst the data provides us with information about whether the various measures have been implemented, it is not possible to draw definite conclusions about their effectiveness. The second stage of the review process - the follow up inspection - will present an opportunity to look in more detail at the implementation and effectiveness of the Rape Action Plan in the field work areas selected by the Inspectorates. There are also a number of limitations associated with the stakeholder survey. The number of responses is relatively low, the geographical coverage is limited and although organisations representing minority groups were contacted, none returned the survey. Furthermore, the absence of baseline data from 2002 when the Rape Action Plan was introduced means that it is difficult to draw conclusions from the ratings made. However, the common themes expressed in the comments made by respondents provide indications of the perceptions held by stakeholders in this sector, and anecdotal information about some of the problems that remain. The inspectorates will be able to use the responses to inform the more detailed investigations that they will undertake.