



Katherine Riley
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
and Fire & Rescue Services

Cc:
Harriet Wistrich
Centre for Women's Justice

26 May 2022

Ministry of Justice progress update

I am writing to provide you with a progress update on recommendations reserved for the Ministry of Justice in your response to the super-complaint on police use of protective measures in cases involving violence against women and girls, published on 24 August 2021. I apologise for the delay in sending this reply, but I would like to reassure you that the Department has made significant progress against your recommendations, which I will outline below.

Recommendation 6

The Ministry of Justice and the Home Office should review the mechanism for informing the police of NMOs and propose remedies for improvement.

It is incredibly important that mechanisms for notification of all protective orders to the police are effective, efficient and timely, so that the police can take vital action to protect victims, some of whom will be amongst the most vulnerable in our society.

The Ministry of Justice has been working for some time with HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and the police to pilot improvements to notification of protective orders from courts to the police. The Department launched a pilot scheme for the notification of Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders and Forced Marriage Protection Orders last year, and I am delighted that it has increased police awareness of orders from below 70% to 98%. Given its success, the pilot was recently extended until 30 September 2022, and we intend to make it permanent thereafter.

More specifically in response to this recommendation, on 28 February we also launched a further pilot, with the North Yorkshire police force, to test a new notification process for non-molestation orders, and for occupation orders with powers of arrest, by courts to the police. The pilot will apply when the application for an order is made to the court in York, Harrogate, Scarborough or Skipton. Under this pilot, in a similar way to the above pilot, the courts will take on the responsibility for notifying the police force as soon as the order is sealed / approved by the court by emailing it to a dedicated email address for North Yorkshire Police. Applicants, and those acting on their behalf, will also be required to send a statement of service to the same email address. It is anticipated that this will enable the police to take more immediate proactive steps to protect the victim. These steps may include an early risk assessment, and subsequent enforcement action where required, once they have received confirmation that the respondent has been served with the order.

In the longer-term, we will investigate a more sophisticated notification system between the courts and the police across a range of protective orders, which is partly dependent on the progress of HMCTS' digital reform programme and adequate technical solutions becoming available later this year.

Recommendation 8

The Ministry of Justice should review a sample of NMOs to consider whether the wording of these are ambiguous and could cause problems for enforcement and propose a remedy to prevent ambiguity in NMO wording, if it is identified.

We understand the need for protective orders such as non-molestation orders to be clear, precise, and sufficiently detailed, so that they can be easily understood by both victims and perpetrators, as well as used by the police in their vital enforcement work.

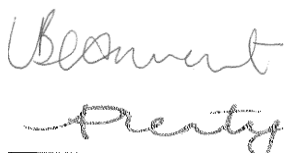
HMCTS have carried out a sample review of such orders and are working with the police in the North Yorkshire pilot area, to develop proposals for improvements to standard templates used by the family court. An immediate improvement has already been made, to include the respondent's date of birth in the order, to assist with police identification of the perpetrator. Further work is underway to collate additional feedback, including from other police forces, with a view to make a range of further improvements to these orders.

We agree with the Centre for Women's Justice, as stated in their letter dated 21 January 2022 on these recommendations, that effective communication and collaboration between the courts and the police, as well as all other agencies in the justice system, is key to delivering better protection to victims and their families, and we expect that our response to your recommendations will have a positive impact. We will continue to work with all the stakeholders, including the Centre for Women's Justice, to consider suggestions for future improvements.

More generally, protecting women and girls from domestic abuse, and all forms of violence against women and girls, remains a top priority for the Government. The Government's Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, which was published in March, will build on commitments made in the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy published last year, and the Domestic Abuse Act.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for considering the important issues raised within this super-complaint. The Ministry of Justice will continue to work closely with the courts, the police and all other stakeholders to ensure victims are kept safe.

Yours sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The first signature is 'Beaumont' and the second is 'Plenty'. Both are written in dark ink on a white background.

Laura Beaumont and Abigail Plenty (jobshare)
Deputy Directors
Vulnerability Policy