



VERA BAIRD^{QC}
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

Making a Difference. Violence Against Women & Girls

By

Vera Baird QC
Police & Crime Commissioner
Northumbria

MESSAGE FROM VERA BAIRD QC

A key priority in my Police & Crime Plan is Domestic and Sexual Abuse, when writing the plan I made a personal commitment to take an active lead on this issue. I have done this during the last 18 months and in particular working with my neighbouring Police & Crime Commissioners. There is no doubt that men suffer from DVSA as well as women and we are keen for them to report so that we can help them and get a better understanding of this problem.

However the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy that we have produced is written in a way that will help to change cultures and outlooks as well as supporting the majority of victims who are female. This newsletter gives you an overview of the work I have been undertaking. If you would like further detail, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0191 221 9800 or email me at enquiries@northumbria-pcc.gov.uk

Best wishes,



Vera Baird QC

Police & Crime Commissioner – Northumbria.

JOINING FORCES – MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

The three Police & Crime Commissioners set out a joint vision for the North East, which built upon it being a strong and confident region which strives to be fair and just. This can only be achieved if all our citizens are safe and feel safe.



Being protected from violence and exploitation is a basic human right and the three Commissioners for the North East developed a joint violence against women and girls strategy. The strategy has twenty priorities, there are three separate delivery plans which reflect the different areas, and in addition the three Commissioners are working together to monitor overview and progress and share best practice and learning.

In December 2014 a special “one year on” conference will be held to evaluate progress and impact across all three areas, assessing the improvements that have been made across the North East.

VERA BAIRD QC: Police & Crime Commissioner – Northumbria.



Every workplace has a responsibility to provide all staff with a safe and effective working environment. For some staff, the workplace is a safe haven and the only place that offers routes to safety.

Domestic abuse can have devastating impacts on victims and their families and it is important that those suffering abuse know they can get support from their employer.

I have established a Domestic & Sexual Abuse in the Workplace Strategy, which is a commitment that employers will take all reasonable steps possible to combat the reality and impact of domestic abuse. The strategy ensures that both victims and perpetrators are aware of the support that is available within their workplace. It helps train managers and the OPCC Northumbria hold regular training course.

In Northumbria we have had a great response from local businesses with the number of companies joining increasing on a weekly basis

TRAINED CHAMPIONS.

An effective workplace policy needs outstanding champions to deliver lasting change. Trained champions have an important role in their organisations to raise awareness around domestic and sexual violence and abuse, and to provide a point of contact for help and support should a colleague need it.

Champions are trained to understand the issues, they know where to go for the relevant help and support. Over 150 champions met together in Newcastle, these heroes are making a real difference in the workplace and the number of champions continues to grow.

If you are a business in Northumbria and haven't yet signed up to the workplace strategy or have champions in place – let me know.



Vera with staff from Gentoo Group, who are great supporters of the domestic abuse and workplace strategy.

FORCED MARRIAGES – NEW LEGISLATION



Karma Nirvana event in Newcastle recently focused on Forced Marriages

Survivors of forced marriages were speaking about their experiences at an event in Newcastle recently.

I opened the event and met women who had taken a conscious decision against all odds to make a difference to their lives.

A forced marriage occurs when one or both people do not consent to the marriage, but are coerced into it.

Often emotional, psychological or financial pressures threats or violence are used. On June 16th forcing someone to marry became a crime.

Police officers in Northumbria have received training about the new legislation. Through training using victim's own experiences, we will make sure that police officers understand the effect of coercion and control on victims. This helps police officer to provide the best victim focused service and to get support and advice from support agencies.

SAFE HAVEN – SAFE NORTHUMBRIA

Cities across the country have a vibrant nightlife, especially in areas that are home to a university, like Sunderland and Newcastle. When people are on a night out they may need extra support, so I have set up a Safe Haven in Newcastle which offers medical advice or other help for anyone who needs any kind of support at all from having taken to much drink to having lost their money or become detached from their friends. There is also a Safehaven in Sunderland.

The Safehaven is staffed by St John's Ambulance and is a valuable resource – it lifts pressure off the police and ambulance service so they can deal with more serious incidences. The Newcastle Safehaven is in the Bigg Market and the Sunderland Safehaven in near the Bridges opposite Debenhams.



Vera Baird launching the Newcastle Safehaven scheme.

VULNERABILITY TRAINING



Sue Smith from the OPCC leading a vulnerability training session

Following the rape of a young woman who was asked to leave a Newcastle nightclub when intoxicated and got separated from her friends, I had to take immediate action to ensure everything possible was done to prevent it from happening again. I called an urgent meeting of all partners, which saw multi agency working at its best. The police, council, security industry and the voluntary sector worked together to strengthen safeguarding in Newcastle city centre.

This wasn't an exercise to apportion blame it was about learning from this tragic event.

Police, door staff, street pastors, taxi drivers, metro staff and hotel staff have all received training on how to identify a vulnerable person and what action to take to help keep them safe.

I told the Home Secretary that door staff were not trained in safeguarding. Immediate action was taken and our course was taken up by the Security Industry Authority and is now compulsory to all door staff.

Cities across the country now have extra eyes and ears in the form of trained workers looking out for vulnerable people. I'm proud that the scheme was developed in Northumbria.

Contact Vera,

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