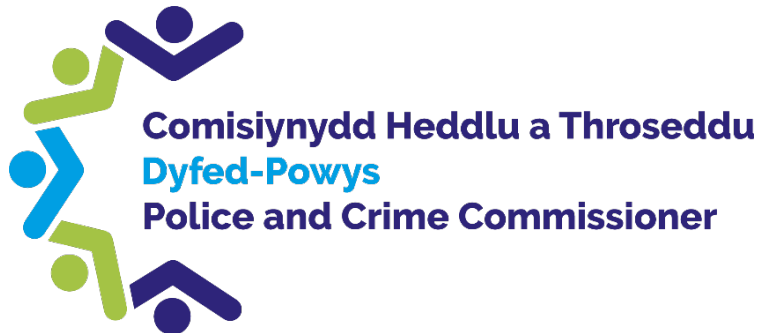


November 2024

(This document is also available in Welsh)



**Police and Crime Commissioner  
for Dyfed-Powys**

**Scrutiny Panel Dip  
Sampling Exercise  
The Voice of the  
Child**

**Members' Findings & Feedback**

**November 2024**

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## **1. Overview, Background, Purpose and Methodology**

The Quality Assurance handbook, available on the [PCC's website](#), states the background, purpose and methodology of the Panel.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2024, Quality Assurance Panel members met at Dyfed Powys Police Headquarters to review a selection of incidents involving juveniles to ensure the Voice of the Child (VoC) was captured. Occurrence Entry Logs (OEL), Public Protection Notice (PPN) and Multi Agency Referral Forms (MARF) were scrutinised with a total of 3 cases being completed.

Detective Inspector (DI) Thomas from the central referral unit within Dyfed Powys Police, briefed the Panel beforehand emphasising that ensuring the VoC is considered at each key stage of an investigation is vital to ensuring a child centred approach is taken. This is relevant for those investigations whereby a child is considered a victim or suspect and also during custody episodes.

The DI explained that currently there is a scrutiny process for custody episodes but not for any criminal investigations and therefore the QAP has been asked to bridge the gap and develop a scrutiny process for investigations.

Further the VoC is relevant throughout the life of an investigation, however some key stages that were relevant for the panel to consider were:

- At the point of first contact.
- When visiting a child at a place of residence or a frequented location.
- When documenting any criminal complaint.
- When making a decision on the direction or outcome of an investigation.
- At the point of arrest.
- At the conclusion of an investigation.

To assist frontline officers with assessing the VoC when responding to incidents, Dyfed Powys Police apply the A.W.A.R.E framework –

A – APPEARANCE

W – WORDS

A – ACTIVITY AND BEHAVIOURS

R – RELATIONSHIPS AND DYNAMICS

E – ENVIROMENT

The panel were asked to consider the above mnemonic when scrutinising the cases alongside ensuring whether the following has been considered –

1. Has a victims needs assessment been completed and are we compliant with the Victim's Code of Practice?
2. Has the VoC been considered during the police response?
3. Has a PPN been submitted or if not a rationale as to why not?
4. Is there a record of the child's wishes within police records or within any accounts they have provided to officers?
5. Is there evidence of the victims wishes / needs being considered as part of supervisor reviews within the OEL log?
6. Is there evidence of strategy discussions taking place in relation to the incident and is the VoC / wishes of the child recorded as part of this?
7. If the investigation is finalised, have the child's wishes been considered during the decision-making process and captured within police records?

## 2. Executive Summary

Overall, the panel concluded that each case reviewed had some elements where the VoC was captured but improvement was needed. During the scrutiny process the panel expressed their concern that the actual VoC must be captured rather than the officer's interpretation.

The panel were also concerned that resourcing of staff may be impacted by the vast amount of detail officers are required to enter in the report logs. Concern was also expressed at the growing number of referrals involving children and suggested potential ways of mitigating the time spent typing up reports/logs including the use of voice/text transcription.

A detailed breakdown of case observations follows below:

## 3. Review of Voice of the Child cases

### Case 1

*A Child has alleged that his father has abused him and also hit his sibling.*

#### **Positives**

- Identified that the Child's wishes were listened to and recorded
- Sensitive approach taken by officers

#### **Negatives**

- Unclear whether the children have been kept informed of progress with the investigation thus suggesting the Victim's code was not complied with
- No PPN provided and no rationale identified as to why
- No evidence of a strategy discussion taking place
- Concerns with the length of time the investigation is taking
- Lots of information captured but not of the VoC
- Concerns that the children's own words haven't been captured, instead the officer's interpretation has been recorded
- No evidence of the victims wishes/needs being considered as part of the supervisor reviews

#### **Queries raised**

- Is the initial discussion with the child recorded? Suggested that any recordings could then be used to transcribe the child's own words for the records giving an accurate record.

## Case 2

*Child has been taken into police care under section 46*

### **Positive**

- PPN has been submitted
- Evidence that the child's wishes have been recorded
- An immediate and detailed investigation has taken place
- VoC was considered during police response

### **Negatives**

- Victim's code of practice not followed. Suggested that there needs to be a better checklist so that officers can evidence their compliance
- Voices of the victim's siblings are captured better within the reports than the victim's

## Case 3

*Indecent images of children have been located on the male suspect's phone. Suspect has 2 known juvenile siblings.*

### **Positive**

- Evidence that the Victim's code of practice has been complied with
- PPN had been submitted
- Evidence of strategy discussion having taken place
- Case was dealt with in a timely manner

### **Negatives**

- No evidence of the VoC being considered during the police response
- Noted that interviews with the children have been undertaken but unclear if ongoing feedback has been provided to the victims
- Not clear if the victims wishes / needs were considered as part of the supervisor review
- Once the victim was identified a child concern report should have been submitted

### **Queries raised**

- As the child victim was unidentified a PPN was completed for the adult male, what is the rationale behind this?

Case 4*Concerns of child sexual exploitation***Positives**

- Evidence that the VoC was considered during the police response
- PPN was issued
- Record of the child's wishes was identified within the police records
- Allegations were followed up in a sensitive manner

**Negatives**

- Some elements of the Victim's code of practice adhered to but not all
- Concerns that the investigation took a long time

**4. General Comments and Observations**

<b>Observations</b>	<b>Force response</b>
<p>Concerns that officer's interpretation of what a child has stated is being recorded, raising concerns that the actual voice of the child is not being recorded.</p> <p>The panel questioned whether the initial discussion with the child is recorded and whether any recordings could be used to transcribe the child's own words for the records?</p>	<p>When an officer is recording an account from a child in a witness interview booklet, the questions asked and subsequent responses should be recorded verbatim unless this is not possible.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that this did not occur in case one and feedback will be provided.</p> <p>Staff that are usually deployed to undertake joint visits with social services often do not have access to recording equipment at this stage of an investigation and written records is what is relied upon.</p>
<p>Within case 3 as the child victim was unidentified an PPN was completed for the adult male. What is the rationale behind this?</p>	<p>With this case an adult PPN has been submitted as there was no child victim identified. An adult male had been found to have Indecent Images Of Children on his device and as such the PPN was submitted to notify the local authority and establish if there were any records of</p>

	the suspect having contact with children.
<p>The panel raised their concerns regarding the amount of time officers are spending writing reports with resourcing being a challenge for Dyfed Powys Police.</p> <p>The panel question whether alternative methods (e.g. speech to text software) have been considered to reduce the time officers have to spend typing up reports?</p>	<p>This is not a matter that generally falls under my area of responsibility.</p> <p>I have explored transcribing software in relation to my area of responsibility and have found it to be unreliable.</p> <p>We have trialled its use when recording strategy discussions for children at risk, however the product was not accurate and we were unable to continue with it.</p>
<p>The panel questioned whether a PPN gets created for every Occurrence Enquiry Log. As some case files contained a PPN and some were without.</p>	<p>A PPN does not get created for every occurrence. A PPN is only submitted if there is an associated child at risk, adult at risk or domestic violence link with a particular occurrence.</p>
<p>The panel requested clarity in understanding where the responsibility lies with providing feedback to a child(police/social services/parent etc), and suggested whether there needs to be a tick box/area dedicated for feedback to be provided on the OEL?</p>	<p>If a child is the victim of a crime then it is the responsibility of the police to provide the child with updates as to the progress of an investigation if appropriate. This can be done via the parents or carer if appropriate but the method of updates should be clearly documented.</p>



