

January 2025  
the locality of SARC buildings  
(This document is also available in Welsh)



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

### **Scrutiny Panel Dip Sampling Exercise New Pathways**

## **Members' Findings & Feedback**

**January 2025**

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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 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2025, Quality Assurance Panel (QAP) members met at Dyfed Powys Police Headquarters to review a selection of referrals involving adult and juveniles to the service of [New Pathways](#). New Pathways are a charity commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to support victims of sexual abuse.

The New Pathways Regional Manager (NPRM) for the Dyfed-Powys area, briefed the Panel on the referral process, the purpose of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) in supporting victims of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) and the complexities associated with the multi-agency approach to providing support. They explained that:

- There is a requirement for New Pathways to make contact with the referring organisation within 48-hours of receiving the referral;
- Referrals are triaged and contact with the victim is made within 3 days for acute cases and within 5 days for non-acute. The term 'acute' is applied when the sexual offence has occurred within a certain period which allows for a forensic examination to be conducted at a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). The term 'non- acute' is applied where the sexual offence occurs outside of the forensic evidence examination window.
- The Role of the ISVA is to provide practical and emotional support to recent and historic victims of sexual crimes. The ISVA will provide the victim with impartial advice on all options available to them to enable them to make informed choices. The ISVA helps victims to navigate their way through the Criminal Justice Process.

- The ISVA service is victim-lead, with the service users themselves determining how frequent contact is made.
- ISVA act as a point of contact to liaise with the Force for updates on behalf of the victim.
- An ISVA will support a victim throughout the police investigation.
- Whilst victim engagement is required, the NRPM specified that the numbers that disengage are very low.

Alongside the Regional Manager for New Pathways, the PCC's Director for Commissioning and Partnerships, explained to the Panel why this topic had been identified as an area for the Panel to scrutinise. Statistics were presented which were linked to the service provided by New Pathways in the years 2022-23 and 2023-24. The unique challenges associated with the demographics of the Dyfed-Powys area and the requirement for victims to travel to the located SARCs in Swansea or Aberystwyth were also highlighted. This prompted a discussion in relation to the accessibility of these services to those victims that reside in rural locations within Dyfed-Powys. It was acknowledged by the OPCC and New Pathways that the locality of SARC buildings may impact on accessibility across Force areas. The locations have been agreed as part of the Wales Sexual Assault Services programme based on demand, population, crime statistics and travel/accessibility considerations. The levels of demand and accessibility of the services will remain under review.

The Panel received pre-read material before attending this meeting which included:

- A template of the referral to New Pathways.
- A template of the Electronic Form (E-Form) question set.
- New Pathways Service Flow Chart which maps out the victim's journey under the organisation.

- A copy of the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) inspection report- *An inspection of how well the police and National Crime Agency tackle the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.*

The aspect, within the HMIC report which the Panel were asked specifically to consider was 'Access to other services' (pages 37-38), which highlighted the following:

*"When a child is the victim of online sexual abuse or exploitation, we found that officers didn't always consider making referrals to SARCs. And some of these centres aren't specifically commissioned for online abuse cases.*

*Children may not need a physical examination and they may not have suffered physical trauma, but by not referring them to SARCs, officers are missing opportunities for victims to access therapeutic services. These services could help children deal with the trauma they may have experienced. These services could also help prepare children should any images of them become public again in the future.*

*Staff members in one SARC told us they had tried to compare the number of cases the SARC had received with the number of cases reported to the police, to make sure all sexual offence cases were being referred to them. But the local force couldn't give them basic information about reports of sexual offending.*


*Sharing an indecent image of a child is a crime, whatever the age of the person sharing. This is a part of a group of crimes that are 'state' offences, which means the Crown is recorded as the victim. The child subject of the image may be linked to the crime, but not recorded as a victim. This means they won't be referred to victim services under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, so they may also be omitted from referrals to support services. This means children may be missing another opportunity for access support services."*

As a result of these findings, the Panel were asked to review referrals received from the police and asked to consider the following:

- 1.** Whether there are any gaps or omissions in identifying appropriate referrals into New Pathways from the Police?

2. To ensure that service users are receiving timely input and the right type of support.
3. To test levels of client engagement
4. How do children's referrals compare with adult referrals in terms of accessibility, timeliness and overall support?

In relation to the fourth focus, the Panel were asked to consider their perspectives of this at the end of the meeting, so that they would be able to evaluate all cases they had scrutinised. Should the Panel discover any issues associated with the referral process from the Police, this will be monitored and tracked outside of this report, as the primary focus of this report is to scrutinise New Pathways ISVA performance.

With the introduction of the E-Forms, this was the first time the Panel were asked to provide their feedback via these forms online. The questions used in the E-Forms were devised by the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and based on the question set used by New Pathways Supervisors when auditing ISVA performance via the ISVA Audit Tool. E-Forms were used to provide data to compliment the four focus areas set out above. To see an example of the E-Form template that Panel used for this meeting, you can click on this  QR code:

Panel members were encouraged to work as pairs when reviewing the first referral and were then able to decide whether to continue in pairs or review referrals individually. This needs to be considered when assessing the variation of data from Cases 1 – 4.

## 2. Executive Summary

Overall, the Panel reviewed four cases.

Positive feedback:

- Of the four cases reviewed, only one had a gap in identifying referrals into New Pathways from the police.

- There was evidence in all four cases of strong engagement between ISVAs and the victims throughout.
- Cases 3 and 4 were considered stronger than the other two on the premise of the audit detail undertaken by the ISVAs in recording discussions, concerns and in displaying the inter-working relationships between New Pathways, the victim and external organisations.
- Across the four cases scrutinised, the service provided to adults and children is comparable and the general indication from the Panel was that children appeared to be handled with appropriate care.

Areas for improvement:

- The length of investigations are perhaps contributed by officer's availability. In one of the four cases, there were delays in establishing the identity of an Officer in Case (OIC). Once the ISVA was aware of the OIC, it transpired that the OIC was unavailable due to being on annual leave.
- Delays in correspondence between Dyfed-Powys Police and other constabularies prolonged the provision of updates to the victim and risking victim disengagement.
- The standards of reporting from ISVAs vary significantly. There does not appear to be a standardised approach for updating case files. The Panel queried the supervision and frequency of quality assurance checks to improve this aspect.

### **3. Review of New Pathways referrals**

#### *Referral 1 - (Adult)*

*A referral was received from an out of force area regarding an adult victim reporting a historic case of sexual abuse.*

**Area of Focus One-** *Were there are any gaps or omissions in identifying appropriate referrals into New Pathways from the Police?*

- The Panel's general consensus was that there were no gaps and that the detail within the referral was relevant.
- Panel members did note that the victim had disclosed they had autism and there appeared to be no reference to the requirement for specialist support to ensure evidence is gleaned in a timely manner.

**Area of Focus Two-** *To ensure that service users are receiving timely input and the right type of support.*

- The correspondence between the ISVA and the victim was timely and a reassuring and sensitive tone were noted by the Panel. However, there were delays outside of the ISVA's control, including waiting on responses from the police and the courts. The process in general was noted as taking too long to conclude with the trauma associated with the victim being the primary focus. There were concerns pertaining to them having to relive these experiences for the purposes of the criminal justice system.

**Area of Focus Three-** *To test levels of client engagement.*

- The victim was noted as being autistic and some members of the Panel queried whether they received the right level of support in facilitating their engagement; however, other members noted that the victim had specified their contact preference and reported this incident independently, which prompted a discussion surrounding capacity. It



was agreed that the likelihood was that the victim was capable to make their own decisions.

- The Panel noted the high level of frequency of correspondences between the ISVA and the victim and the level depth in recording this engagement.

### **Queries raised**

- The Panel queried, in relation to victims who require an Appropriate Adult (AA), who New Pathways has a duty to support. For example, is it the family/friend acting as an AA or the victim in ensuring that support is received and understood?
- The Panel specified that the referral was difficult to follow as it covered a lot of different areas including Family Court, an out of force constabulary and historic abuse. The questioned whether New Pathways supports victims who enter Family Court and can they support victims when they reside in England but the incident occurred in the Dyfed-Powys area?
- The Panel queried as to how frequently should ISVAs be making contact with victims of RASSO?

### *Referral 2 – (child)*

*A child victim has attended a SARC for an intermediary assessment disclosing an incident that has occurred historically in an out of force area.*

**Area of Focus One-** *Were there are any gaps or omissions in identifying appropriate referrals into New Pathways from the Police?*

- There was a gap due to victim receiving counselling.
- There was confusion with regards the dates within the notes.

**Area of Focus Two-** *To ensure that service users are receiving timely input and the right type of support.*

- The Panel raised concerns that approximately five officers had been involved and that the latest officer appeared not to have made contact with the victim.
- The Panel expressed concerns regarding the quality of information sharing between the police; for example, an incorrect telephone number had been provided.
- It also appeared that New Pathways were not getting responses from the police.
- The Panel raised how necessary redactions within the report made it challenging to ascertain the exact circumstances surrounding the referral.

**Area of Focus Three-** *To test levels of client engagement.*

- The Panel expressed concerns regarding the apparent delays with a police force taking responsibility.
- There appeared to be no rapport between the two police forces involved, which would have helped to ensure a smooth service for the victim. As a result of this, strain was placed on the New Pathways service.

### **Queries Raised**

- The Panel noted that the first attempted contact by an ISVA was recorded in February 2022, but the date of actual contact made was in August 2022. The Panel identified that the delay was due to the victim engaging with a counselling service. The Panel posed the question as to whether ISVA can continue their support whilst the victim is seeking counselling?
- The Panel queried the frequency the supervisory oversight associated with this referral, questioning whether the ISVA could have done more

to ensure more prompter response from the police and made more attempts to keep the family updated?

Referral 3 – (adult)

*The victim has disclosed a Sexual Assault by an ex-partner.*

**Area of Focus One-** *Were there are any gaps or omissions in identifying appropriate referrals into New Pathways from the Police?*

- The ISVA displayed excellent empathy to the victim and the report was very thorough. The Panel have requested that the ISVA involved is provided with this positive feedback.
- The question relating to consent to share information between DPP and New Pathways was left blank by the referrer.

**Area of Focus Two-** *To ensure that service users are receiving timely input and the right type of support.*

- There were delays with allocating an OIC. The Panel raised several questions associated with the process of allocating an OIC and queried why an alternative was not considered in this instance. It took ten days for DPP to appoint an OIC, with the OIC then being on annual leave for 3 weeks. There was no alternative contact provided in the interim.

**Area of Focus Three-** *To test levels of client engagement.*

- The Panel highlighted the lengthy process, noting that the victim consistently queried why things had to take so long. The lack of OIC communication did not seem to have negatively affected the rapport between the ISVA and the victim.
- The Panel agreed that the ISVA demonstrated excellent recording of the actions taken and established a supportive and emphatic relationship with the victim.

## **Queries raised**

- Is the delay of allocating an OIC a common occurrence and does this impact client engagement from a New Pathways perspective?

### Referral 4 – (child)

*A child victim has made the referral through the SARC with the support of their mother.*

**Area of Focus One-** *Were there are any gaps or omissions in identifying appropriate referrals into New Pathways from the Police?*

- The medical examination occurred the same day as the referral was received which positively affected the speed at which all follow up steps happened.
- There is evidence of collaborative working between different organisations, a best practice example.
- Due to the length of the investigation, it was noted that the alleged offender had also received a further allegation of rape within the period.

**Area of Focus Two-** *To ensure that service users are receiving timely input and the right type of support.*

- The ISVA asked questions and coordinated responses when the investigation appeared to stagnate.
- A Panel member used the analogy that the ISVA appeared to be the bridge holding this investigation together and supported the victim throughout.

**Area of Focus Three-** *To test levels of client engagement.*

- The Panel highlighted the clear, strong relationship and engagement between the ISVA and victim throughout the investigation period.

- The ISVA constantly liaised with the victim and was adept to the victim's needs.
- There was a good working relationship between the ISVA and the OIC which led to strong engagement throughout.

**Area of Focus Four-** *How does children's referrals compare with the adult referrals in terms of accessibility, timeliness and overall support.*

- From evaluating all four cases, Panel members identified a comparable service from ISVAs. There were similarities between the cases which could account for this; the lengthy delays associated with the involvement of out of force areas, the length of investigations, and the consideration of neurodivergent needs within one adult referral and one child referral.
- The Panel acknowledged that they only sampled a small number of referrals, on which these opinions are based.
- Overall, the Panel was impressed with the standard of the Referrals 3 & 4 in comparison to Referrals 1 & 2.

#### 4. Response to Queries Raised

Observations	New Pathways response
The Panel queried, in relation to victims who require an Appropriate Adult (AA), who does New Pathways have a duty to support; for example, the family/friend acting as an AA or with the victim directly in ensuring that support is received and understood?	<i>This would depend on the age/capacity and preference of the client. If the Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) is engaging with the child or young person directly, the family member/friend is signposted/referred to access their own independent support.</i>

The Panel specified that the first referral was difficult to follow as it covered a lot of different areas including Family Court, an out of force constabulary and an historic abuse. They questioned, do New Pathways support victims who enter Family Court and can they support victims who reside in England with the incident occurring in the Dyfed-Powys area?

*Yes. Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) will support at family court unless there is another professional better placed to do so. For example, an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) could be the more appropriate professional to support a client if the case is domestic abuse related.*

*The Independent Sexual Violence Adviser may also support a client to access one of the Remote Evidence Sites for their family court hearing.*

*Independent Sexual Violence Advisers can support clients who reside in England, or anywhere outside of Wales, if that is the client's preference. We are client led, so some clients referred into the service may choose to stay with New Pathways, despite living or moving away.*

*We would always discuss the option of people engaging with support from their local Independent Sexual Violence Adviser Service and/or any other appropriate services. We will provide information on those services, which includes signposting and/or referring.*

*If a client chooses support locally our team of Independent Sexual Violence Advisers may pick up the support again, if the trial takes place in Wales, and their local Independent Sexual Violence Adviser is unable to travel to the trial. We would work in partnership with the client's local service.*

<p>Within Referral 1, the Panel could not ascertain whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the 48-hour response time had been made with the referrer;</li> <li>• Whether the safeguarding concerns had been identified and reported appropriately;</li> <li>• Whether there the client contact procedure had been adhered to.</li> </ul> <p>Can you look into the file and provide some clarification on these points above?</p>	<p><i>The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) is that the 48-hr response time is captured on the Case Management System. This referral was received via email on a Saturday and an automated email reply sent to the referrer confirming receipt of referral.</i></p> <p><i>Safeguarding Concerns - there is a safeguarding section on our case management system and within the Safety and Support Assessment (SAS). This had been completed by the ISVA who outlined the status of social services involvement and an assessment of any immediate safeguarding concerns.</i></p> <p><i>The Client contact procedure was followed. The referral was received on the Saturday. Uploaded, Triaged and allocated on the Monday. ISVA contacted the client on the Wednesday, within the 5 days KPI.</i></p>
<p>Also, within referral 1, the victim had disclosed they had autism and there appeared to be no reference to the requirement for specialist support. Can you advise if this is the case?</p>	<p><i>The ISVA and Client discussed the Client's Autism from the first contact. This is visible within the client notes and throughout the SAS. This included support on how the client can engage more effectively, and how to approach certain questions.</i></p>
<p>How frequent should ISVAs make contact with victims of RASSO?</p>	<p><i>Frequency of support is led by the client. This ranges from weekly (especially at the start of engaging with the service) to once every three weeks, once a month, bi-monthly or on an ad hoc basis if that is what a client prefers.</i></p> <p><i>The frequency of support changes throughout the time a client is in service. This will depend on their personal support needs at any given</i></p>

	<p><i>time and to meet client needs during different stages and decision of the Criminal Justice Process.</i></p>
<p>The Panel noted that the first attempted contact was made in February 2022; however, the date specified that the ISVA made contact with the victim was in August. The Panel noted the delay with victim engagement was in relation to the victim engaging with a counselling service. Can ISVAs continue their support whilst the victim is seeking counselling?</p>	<p><i>From reviewing the record, the delay was due to the client being unable to engage at the time of initial referral. The dates are for two different referrals, the initial contact was with the client's stepmother on the same day as the referral which is in line with the client contact procedure and meeting with our KPI. Further attempts to contact step-mum were unsuccessful, which resulted in a letter being sent to the family. Following a no response to the letter the client file was closed, which is all in line with the client contact procedure.</i></p> <p><i>The client was then referred by police into SARC for an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview, following further disclosures, and asked that the ISVA did not make contact until after the ABE.</i></p> <p><i>Once the ABE was conducted, ISVA did contact the client's stepmother which is when the client then engaged with ISVA support.</i></p> <p><i>In relation to supporting victims who are seeking counselling, our Independent Sexual Violence Advisers can continue to support clients, if that is what the client wants, whilst they are accessing counselling. Our Independent Sexual Violence Advisers and Counselling teams work closely to make sure that the most</i></p>



	<i>appropriate support is in place for clients.</i>
Within referral 2, the Panel were unable to clarify if safeguarding concerns had been identified or reported appropriately.	<i>From reviewing this referral, the initial Safeguarding assessment was conducted by the ISVA on the day of the referral and recorded on the SAS.</i>
How frequent are supervisory quality assurance checks conducted in providing oversight associated with these referrals. The Panel queried whether more could have been done by the ISVA in the second referral, in ensuring more prompt responses from the police and made more attempts to keep the family updated?	<p><i>The ISVA policies and procedures on areas that include case management and supervision, ensure a standardised approach along with robust management.</i></p> <p><i>ISVAs complete the exact same Safety and Support (SAS) Assessment which has 14 domains to always capture client risk and needs. This is a nationally recognised risk and needs assessment for ISVA services.</i></p> <p><i>They all follow the ISVA checklist, which is a visual reminder of what needs doing/when in line with the client wishes. E.g. some clients want to know about the Criminal Justice process straight away, other clients prefer bite size information.</i></p> <p><i>All ISVAs undertake the ISVA 'Note Taking' Training.</i></p> <p><i>When supervision and quality assurance checks are conducted the SAS is reviewed alongside the notes to check for the appropriate level of detail/information etc; because the information could be recorded in dif-</i></p>

	<p><i>ferent places. There is a standardised approach for content, the way in which things are written will vary.</i></p> <p><i>The frequency of supervisory oversight of cases includes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Bi-monthly Case Reviews</i></li> <li>• <i>Monthly Management Supervision</i></li> <li>• <i>Monthly Clinical Supervision</i></li> <li>• <i>Bi-monthly Reflective Practice</i></li> </ul> <p><i>The ISVA made numerous attempts to contact the police at West Midlands Police. They also contacted Dyfed Powys Police when receiving no response to their contact to seek their support.</i></p> <p><i>The lack of contact should have been escalated to a Detective Sergeant, and then to a Detective Inspector, when the lack of contact continued, as is our standard practice. This is much harder to do when the Independent Sexual Violence Advisers are engaging with professionals outside of Wales as the professional relationships and processes that we have within Wales are not in place.</i></p>
<p>Is the delay of allocating an OIC a common occurrence within Dyfed-Powys and has this impacted on client engagement from a New Pathways perspective?</p>	<p><i>It is not common that a delay occurs before allocating an OIC. It does happen occasionally, and this does impact on client engagement from New Pathways perspective. It can lead clients to feeling forgotten, or not important.</i></p>

## **5. Next Steps**

With the QAP now introduced to New Pathways, it will be arranged for the members of the Panel to visit the New Pathways office before the next scrutiny activity in a year's time from this report. By visiting the New Pathways office, members will be encouraged to speak to ISVAs personally and obtain a wider understanding of the service they provide. It is then hoped that further scrutiny can be done to establish the extent of how valued the New Pathways service is at providing support to victims of RASSO. The findings of this report will be tracked for monitoring purposes and used for comparative use when returning to this topic in a year's time.