

## Written Evidence submitted by Deputy Chief Constable Ivan Balhatchet [HBA0053]

### **Introduction**

I am currently the Deputy Chief Constable for Northamptonshire Police and the National Policing Lead (NPL) for Honour-Based Abuse: Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (HBA: FM & FGM). Further to my written and oral evidence, below is my response to the supplementary questions asked by the committee:

#### **1) *Some evidence we received suggested that some officers or forces are taking an over-zealous or oppressive approach to policing some communities. What is the NPCC doing (as an organisation and in collaboration with others) to prevent such practices?***

It is generally accepted that the police have faced challenges and criticism concerning their engagement with members of ethnic minority communities in the past, especially among Black communities, and work is ongoing across all police forces to address this. Information has been provided by the national Police Race Action Plan, which I have included below.

#### **Police Race Action Plan**

We recognise that there are longstanding concerns around the over-policing and under-protecting of certain communities, especially among Black communities. We are entrusted with our powers on behalf of the communities we serve, and it is vital that we have their trust in using these powers proportionately to protect the most vulnerable in society.

We know that there is a disproportionate rate of victimisation that Black people suffer for certain crime types, and we see this in, for example, the extent to which Black boys are particularly vulnerable to harm from criminal exploitation and Black women are disproportionately victims of sexual assault.

As part of our Police Race Action Plan work to improve policing for Black people, we are looking directly at both ensuring that Black communities are not over-policed and that they are not under-protected against victimisation.

As part of this, we will adopt an 'explain or reform' approach to examining police policy or practice where racial disparity exists. Where disparity exists, we seek to understand the reason. Where it cannot be explained, this will automatically prompt consideration of reform. There will be a particular focus on the lawfulness, proportionality, and necessity of the use of police powers to ensure demonstrable legitimacy.

The Police Race Action Plan is being led by Deputy Chief Constable Tyron Joyce. Responsibility for programme delivery around use of police powers is being led by Chief Constable Lucy D'Orsi and protection against victimisation by Assistant Chief Constable Matt Ward.

The plan was developed jointly by the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), working in collaboration with Black communities and partners – including the National Black Policing Association (NBPA) and an independent scrutiny and oversight board (ISOB).

## Honour-Based Abuse

In the area of HBA, officers are often very conscious of racial and cultural sensitivities due to mistakes of the past, which can lead to an overcautious attitude when dealing with cases. Some HBA charities and not-for-profit voluntary organisations that represent victims have also said that many organisations, including the police, are sometimes too cautious about the impact of investigations on community relations and cohesion. This has meant that victims can become disenfranchised from the police, hampering the investigation.

I have been clear about the importance of officers dealing with cases of HBA fearlessly, and progressing the investigation thoroughly, irrespective of the protected characteristics of the perpetrator(s), and the perceived authority of their community.

### **2) DCC Balhatchet acknowledged at Q32 that “we have not got to a point yet where we have a risk assessment tool for HBA in policing”. What work has the NPCC done to create such a tool, or to ensure existing tools can capture risks relating to HBA accurately?**

This is something I alluded to in both my oral and written evidence submission, under Section 4, iii, with the recommendation that was made by HMIC (now HMICFRS) in its report ‘The depths of dishonour: Hidden voices and shameful crimes’, which stated:

***“Recommendation 13. By June 2016, the College of Policing should review the current approach to risk assessment in relation to cases of HBV, FM and FGM. This should include an assessment of the sufficiency of instruments and methods currently available to assess risk in such cases.”***

As mentioned in my initial written submission, the recent Tees Valley Inclusion Project Super-Complaint found that police fail to identify [my emphasis] some behaviours as HBA, and subsequently fail to appreciate the level of risk to victims.

Since inheriting this portfolio in 2017, I have been engaging with the College of Policing to ensure an effective risk assessment tool (RAT) for HBA exists for (frontline) officers as it is my professional belief that this is needed. The College of Policing has, and is developing, guidance for primary and secondary investigators, which is welcomed.

The previous RAT used by policing, called ‘DASH’ (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Honour Based Abuse), contained HBA specific questions. The College of Policing has now launched ‘DARA’ (Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment), which while providing an increased focus on coercive and controlling behavior, does not contain HBA specific questions.

I believe that a specific question within DARA on HBA would help to reassure victims that police understand the issue, take it seriously, and that we are asking the right questions to identify offending. I will continue to engage directly with the College of Policing on this.

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