

**Report of the Chief Constable to the Chair and Members
of the Operational Policing Panel
21st July 2011**

**Executive & Presenting Officer: Mr Sean White, Assistant Chief Constable
(Crime & Operations)**

Status: For information

Update on the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)

1. Purpose

1.1 This report is to update Members on the progress of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).

2. Recommendation

2.1 That Members note the content of this report.

3. Reasons

3.1 The SARC was founded on the basis of best practice recommendations from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI). The purpose of the SARC is to improve the service provided to victims of rape or sexual assault.

3.2 The centre is named Helen Britton House and is located within the North Ormesby Health Village. The centre combines bespoke facilities for forensic medical examination and video interview of victims with direct access to crisis support, contraceptive and sexual health advice and signposting to counselling and ongoing support. This is all carried out within a single location, designed to provide a safe and appropriate environment for victims. The facility constitutes a significant improvement from previous arrangements.

- 3.3 The SARC is a joint partnership venture between the Police Authority, North Tees & Hartlepool Primary Care Trust (PCT), Middlesbrough PCT, South Tees PCT and Redcar & Cleveland PCT. The Centre also benefits from the co-operation and assistance of local volunteer / support organisations specialising in counselling for victims of sexual violence.
- 3.4 The SARC employs one full time manager and two daytime staff both comprising 24 hour posts. The SARC also has a team of six out of hours on-call crisis workers (including one male) to provide effective crisis intervention outside of normal office hours. The SARC has been successful in securing funding for a part time Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) post to be based within the SARC, to fulfil a central co-ordination role once an appropriate person is appointed.
- 3.5 Advertising campaigns have continued in the first quarter of 2011 with Police Authority funding posters, newspaper banners, adhesive labels and car park ticket advertising. The SARC needs to continue raising awareness to encourage none police referrals to come forward; for storage of evidence, to share anonymous intelligence and to have their health needs assessed. This proves to be an ongoing challenge.
- 3.6 The SARC currently has a SARC Operational Management Board, which has membership from the Police Authority, Cleveland Police, health, private medical services and the voluntary sector. Day to day operational supervision is managed through the Community Division of South Tees Hospital Foundation Trust. Following a National Support Team (NST) visit the structure is being revised to include a Strategic Management Board consisting of key stakeholders and commissioners.

4. Performance

- 4.1 Between 1st April 2010 and 31st March 2011 the SARC had a total of 340 referrals, an increase of 16% on the same period last year.
- 4.2 Referrals from the police account for 83% (283) of clients accessing support in this period.
- 4.3 The remaining 57 clients accessed the SARC without police involvement.
- 4.4 Of the total referrals, 48 were male clients. This is a significant increase on the previous year when only 30 of the clients were male.
- 4.5 Of the total, 131 referrals were under 16 years

- 4.6 During this period SARC staff delivered 13 training and awareness raising sessions. This has included inputs to:
- Sexual Offence Liaison Officer (SOLO) training (and development days)
 - Probationary Officers training
 - Paediatricians
 - Midwifery teams
 - Victim Support
 - University Students (Microbiology)
 - Genitourinary Medicine
 - SECOS (Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Streets).
- 4.7 During this period 10 referrals have involved cases from other police areas and a Service Level Agreement is now in place between the SARC and North Yorkshire Police for use of the facility.
- 4.8 The SARC Manager sits on the Rape Operations Group chaired by the Detective Chief Inspector responsible for Public Protection. The group has representatives from all four districts, both Vulnerability Units (usually at Detective Inspector level), the CPS rape champion and a representative from Reliance covering the provision of medical examinations at the SARC. The SARC is a standing agenda item for this meeting, this allows for any issues involving the SARC to be discussed and resolved quickly.

5. Implications

5.1 Finance

The resourcing of the SARC has previously been agreed by Members (4 PCT's and Cleveland Police) with no change to the funding levels since 2007 other than the addition of £35k to operate the new team of crisis workers. Core funding for day staff and service costs remains the same and increasing expenditure is putting additional pressures on the SARC budget. The NST recommended an urgent review of expenditure, staffing levels and appropriate salaries at Helen Britton House which may place a need for additional funding.

- 5.2 As the SARC is not a voluntary agency or a registered charity therefore access to external funding streams is limited. Home Office monies for victim clothing and other capital costs will no longer be available. Future Home Office funding will be available for the SARC based ISVA only

- 5.3 The SARC has installed UV lighting to the examination rooms and created a second Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) recording suite from the final capital amounts from the Home Office. These funds also enabled the purchase of DVD copying equipment.

5.4 Diversity and Equal Opportunities

The SARC supports victims from all groups regardless of gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religious belief or age. Additional considerations have been

included which give assistance to those with specific needs. For example, interpreters' fees are included in the revenue costs to assist victims who may not have English as their first language. The building is Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant.

5.5 Human Rights Act

There are no Human Right Act implications arising from this report.

5.6 Sustainability

The initial term of the lease is 25 years. Members have previously noted that the Authority will seek an extension to this period in agreement with its strategic partners.

5.7 Risk

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The SARC is functioning well and meeting its key objectives in providing an excellent facility for dealing with victims of rape and sexual assault. Staffing levels and financial resources need to be secured for sustainability.

Sean Price
Chief Constable