

**From The Job Jan 13 2006:**

THE RECOMMENDATIONS from a major review into rape investigation across the Met aim to ensure the best possible service for victims.

The purpose of the Rape Review - "a self-critical and transparent appraisal of the service provided by the Met to the victims of rape" - was to explore the differences in recorded crime figures from borough to borough and establish best practice and a way forward.

The main differences being examined were the proportions of crimes recorded as rape compared to those recorded as "no crime" or "not crimed" (not rape).

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Brian Paddick, who led the review, said: "Clearly, our concern was that there might be differences in the quality of the investigation in different parts of London."

The review looked at all rape offences in April and May 2005 from Crime Recording Information System (CRIS) records. The Project Sapphire team also visited the highest and lowest performing boroughs in terms of the proportion of cases solved.

DAC Paddick said: "What the review found, among other things but most notably, was that two different things affected the recorded outcome. These were the characteristics of the offence - for example the age of the victim, where the offence happened, the relationship between the offender and the victim - and the characteristics of the investigation, for example the police response."

Westminster borough, which is split into five divisions in terms of crime figures, has all its rapes investigated by one Sapphire team. However, across the five divisions there are different no/not crime rape and detection rates, which showed the variation across Westminster is down to characteristics of the offence, rather than the investigation. Because crime figures on their own say little about the quality of each rape investigation, a number of boroughs were visited and interviewed by the Sapphire team on the basis of their performance.

In the previous year, characteristics of successful Sapphire teams had been noted, including issues around supervision, partnership working, the way in which investigations are carried out, the use of forensics, training, leadership by the Senior Management Team, the way in which the Sexual Offences Investigation Techniques (SOIT) officers worked in conjunction with detectives and the use of intelligence.

DAC Paddick said: "All of these characteristics are set out in the policy and procedures which were first established under Project Sapphire in 2001 and updated in January 2005, and therefore the review confirms that the Met procedures and policies are recognised as best practice."

The Met has a central Sapphire team, early evidence kits (a Met initiative which

has now been adopted across the country), 24/7 cover across the whole force area by Havens, SOIT officer training and special interest seminars for investigators. The Met also benefits from a well-established Cold Case Review section looking back at previously unsolved cases, with a 100 per cent conviction rate.

"The point of the review is that it was self-initiated and although we provide an excellent service, we are looking to continuously improve the service we deliver to the victims of rape," said DAC Paddick.

As well as identifying a range of good practice, the review concludes that the organisation needs to improve the consistent application of this across the whole of London.

A lot of work was also done around the most vulnerable of rape victims - those intoxicated through drink or drugs and those with mental health issues.

DAC Paddick said: "We believe there is a need for a major rethink about how we investigate and prosecute these offences, we are determined to protect those victims and determined to bring to justice those who prey on these most vulnerable victims. This is the first time a force has gone into this level of research and it enables the Met to proactively work with its partners to think of innovative solutions to these most difficult cases."

Det Chief Insp Dave Osborn, head of Sapphire, said: "I see this review as a very positive step that will contribute significantly to the changes being introduced by Sapphire. These will see continued improvements to both victim care and quality of investigations. It complements a number of recent changes that have been designed to support borough Sapphire teams and frontline staff responding to allegations of rape and serious sexual assault.

"This last performance year there was a reversal of the previously falling numbers of prosecutions for rape. I am particularly glad to see that the final report recognises the considerable examples of good practice and dedication regularly shown by borough Sapphire teams and their partners."

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN RAPE INVESTIGATION IN THE MET**

The Project Sapphire team's borough visits identified a number of features relating to both higher and lower performance. These included the way in which resources, procedures, partnership working, specific staff skills and training either made investigations stronger or weaker.

= Staff should not simply be posted onto Sapphire teams but selected on the basis of either specific skills and experience or their aptitude and enthusiasm for investigator or SOIT officer roles.

= Brigading Sapphire teams with Community Safety Teams should be avoided as

it leads to investigators being swamped with high volume, comparatively lower level investigations, impairing their ability to investigate complex rape allegations.

= Dedicated Sapphire teams are vital and should be present on all boroughs. On boroughs where they had been disbanded, performance in relation to rape investigations had fallen.

= Health service staff at Havens should receive bespoke training relevant to rape investigation.

= Borough rape performance should be subject to scrutiny by Territorial Policing (TP) Link Commanders.

= TP Sapphire should work with key partners and the Crime Academy to develop a specific training programme for investigating detectives, based on lessons learned from the review.

= There should be more borough-level scrutiny of rape investigation, even though it is not included in Home Office and Treasury performance targets.