

QUESTIONS TO THE PCC – SEPTEMBER 2018

Question from Cllr Stuart Sansome, Vice-Chair – SY PCP / Rotherham MBC

20th September 2018

Is the PCC consulted by the Home Office when those who have been imprisoned for very serious crimes, e.g. murder, sex offences to children, go before the Parole Board and are released back into the community where they committed the crime?

PCC Response

The Commissioner is not consulted by the Home Office when someone who has been imprisoned for very serious crimes, e.g. murder, sex offences to children, go before the Parole Board and are released back into the community where they committed the crime. I understand the Parole Board meet with the prisoner and professionals who will give evidence on the risk the prisoner poses.

Following the recent publicity around the John Worboys case, guidance on the Victim Personal Statement has just been updated whereby victims who opt into the Probation Victim Contact Scheme (where the offender has been sentenced to custody for 12 months or more for a serious sexual or violent offence), must be given the opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement to the Parole Board in those cases where the offender has a Parole Board review.

The Victim Personal Statement (VPS) gives victims the opportunity to explain how the crime affected them and their family, and what the impact of release will be.

Further information on this can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/victim-personal-statement?utm_source=7ad0e272-f8e5-4e3c-a5fc-ee66888acc93&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

Question from Cllr Joe Otten, Panel Member / Sheffield City Council

12th September 2018

There was some criticism on social media in September (2018) of the SYP policy of recording non-criminal hate incidents. Would the PCC care to outline the value of recording such hate incidents?

PCC Response

Thank you for your question.

I hope that you understand what South Yorkshire Police were seeking to do when they tweeted their comments and referred to their 'Hate Hurts' campaign on social media over the weekend of 8/9 September 2018.

South Yorkshire Police know that sometimes an incident occurs that can trigger a great deal of hateful comment on social media (and in public) directed at people who are different from the majority. This may be because of their race, their gender, their sexual orientation, their religion or a disability. This can cause those who share those characteristics to become fearful for their safety.

We know these are legitimate fears because, for example, we have had incidents in the recent past in South Yorkshire that began as low level expressions of hatred directed towards an ethnic minority but turned into crimes. We also know from elsewhere that what begins as hate incidents can sometimes escalate and become a very serious crime indeed – as happened to Fiona Pilkington and her daughter.

In this instance, an incident happened in one of our towns that caused just such comments on social media and the police sought to reassure people who might have been affected. In this instance it was about ethnicity.

Their Hate Hurts campaign, which has been running for sometime, urges people to report incidents of hate – not hate in general but hate directed towards those who have the characteristics I mention above. This gives them some reassurance that the police take their duty to keep them safe seriously and enables the police to gain an idea of what the issues are. It was not an invitation to report any old incident that caused someone upset.

It has been suggested that the police should only concern themselves with crimes. But they must also seek to prevent crimes happening in the first place if they can, which is why they encourage people to report not just hate incidents as defined above but also incidents of domestic abuse or anti-social behaviour which may not be crimes but might lead to crimes if not tackled.

This is what every police force in the country seeks to do. It is part of their duty to keep us safe and protect the vulnerable.