

REACH CENTRES - SUCCESSFUL FUNDING APPLICATION**Joint Report of the Chief Constable, Clerk and Treasurer**

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform members of a successful bid for funding from the Home Office to assist the REACH Centres (Sexual Assault Referral Centres) in the provision of colposcopes.

2 BACKGROUND

The REACH Centres opened in September 1991 following the work of an interagency working party which identified the need for a specialist service for victims of a sexual assault.

The Rhona Cross Centre in Newcastle and the Ellis Fraser Centre in Sunderland provide free confidential counselling advice to those aged 16 years and over, offering support to victims of serious sexual assault as well as forensic examinations. In 2000 the service was extended to include male victims.

The service provided by the REACH Centres has been recognised by the Home Office as good practice and has played a key role in a recent research project funded by the Home Office. The findings of this research will be published shortly and will provide advice to new, existing and potential Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCS).

A SARC is referred to as a 'one stop' location where victims of a sexual assault can receive care and counselling whilst at the same time having the opportunity to assist the police investigation into alleged offences. This involves the victim participating in the forensic examination process which is vital in many sexual assaults, particularly rape cases.

To encourage the development of SARCS the Home Office recently provided funding and asked Forces to submit bids. Although the funding was primarily aimed at Forces who were considering developing a SARC, a bid was submitted by Northumbria Police to assist the existing REACH Centres in the provision of colposcopes

The Home Office has now confirmed that a grant of £16,500 has been awarded to enable the purchase of colposcopes for the REACH Centres. This equipment is specialist medical equipment used for the examination of victims providing a powerful light source and digital recording facilities.

3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

4 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The provision of colposcopes will enhance professional standards in the area of forensic examination and support the force's positive duty to protect life afforded by Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Treasurer has confirmed that the funding will fully meet the cost of the equipment and there are no other financial implications directly arising from this report.

6 RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.