

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
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23 March 2016

Dear Home Secretary

HMIC Inspection: 'The welfare of vulnerable people in police custody'

In line with my statutory responsibilities I am writing in formal response to the HMIC 'Welfare of vulnerable people in police custody' from 2015. Whilst I appreciate that some time has elapsed since the publication of the report this does afford me the opportunity to provide a more considered response now that Dorset Police have had time to fully consider the report recommendations and implement any required changes.

The implementation of any action required as a result of the report recommendations is overseen by the Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) Board locally.

Transparency – police detention data

HMIC recommended that the Home Office work with police forces to pilot a data collection series and Dorset Police will naturally engage with this process as required. The suggested minimum data requirements by HMIC would undoubtedly cause the Force some challenges in being able to retrieve it in a timely manner, but a number of areas are already routinely collected and reported on eg levels of stop and search, arrest and detention; use of police custody as a place of safety; and numbers of children detained in police custody and for how long.

Regular reports on custody

As PCC I am responsible for administering the Independent Custody Visiting (ICV) Scheme for Dorset and, since 2014, am also Chair of the national Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). ICV visit reports are routinely published on my website:

<http://www.dorset.pcc.police.uk/get-involved/volunteering/custody-visiting/icv-visit-reports/>

As the most recent PEEL Legitimacy report for Dorset identifies, Dorset Police is compliant with most of the Best Use of Stop and Search (BUSS) requirements although more work is required around the recording and publishing of outcomes which is an ongoing process. Children are not detained in police custody as a place of safety within Dorset.

Race equality governance framework

Core data sets are routinely collated by the Force as part of routine business monitoring and presented to the quarterly Confidence and Equality Board, which I am represented on. This monitoring allows for the identification of key issues, trends and patterns which in turn informs the agendas of the relevant police consultation groups locally, as appropriate. The Confidence and Equality Board is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and takes the strategic lead for driving improvements in practice, linking with other strategic boards as necessary.

Duty to promote equality

My representation on the Confidence and Equality Board facilitates my role in holding the Chief Constable to account for the discharge of this duty under the Equality Act 2010. Dorset Police has a positive action strategy in place to look at increasing workforce representation in terms of recruitment, retention and progression, overseen by a working group to drive implementation. Naturally this remains a significant challenge given the relatively low BAME levels in Dorset coupled with workforce reductions in recent years.

In line with the public sector equality duty (PSED) the Force does monitor and report on a number of areas of employment data against the protected characteristics. The Confidence and Equality Board again provides strategic oversight of this, including the identification of any issues and commissioning of activity or work as a result.

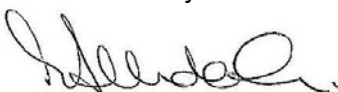
Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are routinely carried out for all Force policies and procedures although consideration is being given to applying this more widely to custody operations and activity.

A number of further developments have also happened since this inspection took place. In February 2016 HMIC/P conducted an unannounced custody inspection in Dorset and whilst we still await publication of the final report, initial feedback has been extremely positive, including around the 'treatment and care', 'individual rights' and 'healthcare' aspects of the review.

With regard to use of force, in June 2015 I published the findings of the independent review of the Use of Force in Dorset that I had commissioned and which also led to me sitting on the NPCC Use of Force Programme Board nationally. This work will see Dorset Police act as a Pathfinder Force in piloting the new national approach and processes in recording and reporting police use of force from 1 April 2016.

I can confirm that I have consulted with the Chief Constable in formulating this response and trust that this provides you with the necessary reassurance around action being taken locally by Dorset Police in response to the relevant HMIC report recommendations.

Yours sincerely



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Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner

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