

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16 March 2020

Dear Home Secretary

Response to HMICFRS - National Child Protection Inspections 2019 thematic report

In line with my statutory responsibilities as Police and Crime Commissioner and following consultation with the Chief Constable, I am pleased to provide the following response to the HMICFRS and the Secretary of State for the Home Office in respect of the above “National Child Protection Inspections 2019 thematic report”, which was published by HMICFRS on 27 February 2020.

The Chief Constable and I welcome the report; we also support the high level conclusions that:

- Protecting vulnerable children requires further resourcing at a time of decreasing officer numbers and budget cuts;
- The approach of the police and partners needs to be more proactive in identifying children that could be at risk of abuse.

Furthermore we agree that the current system is unsustainable, that the police can't do this work alone and that more resourcing needs to be given to help support and protect vulnerable children.

Points 1, 2 and 3 below concern the three recommendations in relation to the actions to be taken by Chief Constables; these three recommendations have been incorporated by Dorset Police into their child safeguarding plans.

1. This recommendation concerns the action to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children, including the development of more effective diversions for vulnerable children who commit lower level crimes and the response of Dorset Police to that recommendation.

Dorset Police's response: I understand from the Chief Constable that a Child Centred Policing

Group has been established by Dorset Police as a sub group of the Force's Legitimacy Board which is chaired by the Chief Constable and attended by the PCC's representative. The Child Centred Policing Group has been in operation for some time to oversee steps to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children in Dorset.

2. This recommendation concerns the need for the regular review of performance management and assessment of the quality of decision making.

Dorset Police's response: I understand from the Chief Constable that as part of its role the Child Centred Policing Group also reviews performance and quality assurance of decision making in relation to young people.

3. This recommendation concerns the need for those forces who have not as yet been inspected, to identify and implement good practice and the learning highlighted from the HMICFRS National Child Inspection Programme and joint targeted area child protection inspections.

Dorset Police's response: We are aware that Dorset Police is one of the forces yet to be inspected by HMICFRS in this context. I understand from the Chief Constable that Dorset Police will as requested be carrying out a self-assessment to identify and implement good practice and learning. In addition, the Force will shortly be returning a number of key documents in anticipation of a forthcoming HMICFRS inspection on a date to be confirmed.

In terms of the remaining recommendations in the above report, the Chief Constable and I support the development of a national early help and prevention strategy for children at risk and the need to consider the extent to which social workers undertake interviews of children with the police.

We also support the proposed review of the unnecessary detention of children, including the comments regarding the provision of alternative accommodation and the use of police bail.

This response will be published on the OPCC website.

Yours sincerely



Martyn Underhill
Police and Crime Commissioner