

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
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6 February 2020

Dear Home Secretary

Response to the HMICFRS Report “Both sides of the coin: The police and National Crime Agency's response to vulnerable people in 'county lines' drug offending”

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 HMICFRS Report “Both sides of the coin: The police and National Crime Agency's response to vulnerable people in 'county lines' drug offending” which was published on 10 January 2020.

The Chief Constable and I welcome the report which recognises the achievements in terms of how the issue of county lines is tackled through:

- the establishment in 2018 of the national county lines co-ordination centre (NCLCC);
- the effective use of modern slavery legislation by police forces;
- the good use of ‘intensification weeks’ co-ordinated law enforcement activity during dedicated weeks of action against county lines networks; and
- good practice in relation to police bail.

The Chief Constable and I also recognise that the lack of a fully integrated, national response means that investigations are often less effective than they should be. We agree with the recommendations identified in the report.

Specific Actions by Dorset Police to tackle County Lines

In terms of action by Dorset Police, the Force here recognised the risk in relation to County Lines at an early stage. Intelligence, investigative and neighbourhood policing resources have been focused on the issues involved, especially in relation to the associated exploitation of vulnerable people.

The Office of the Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner

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The Force has created a dedicated County Lines team in the West of the County and the Force are in the process of forming a similar team in the East of the County.

I and the Chief Constable will continue to take a keen interest in developments in this area, and where appropriate take account of any recommended changes to the Force's response to vulnerable people.

Dorset Police has been proactive in recognising, acknowledging and responding to the threat of county lines – as acknowledged in a 2018/19 inspection by HMICFRS.

As explained more fully in the article on our website (see link [here](#)) a Joint Targeted Area Inspection in Dorset identified concerns regarding the wider partnership response to children and young people at risk of exploitation and county lines. A number of areas were identified for priority action. As a result of this, working closely with the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards here in Dorset, I hosted a successful county lines Problem Solving Forum with relevant partnership agencies to discuss ideas in response to the challenges. Our website article identifies some of the positive steps that have been taken since.

This response will be published on the OPCC website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martyn Underhill', written in a cursive style.

Martyn Underhill
Police and Crime Commissioner