

To the Secretary of State for the Home Department, HMICFRS and the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel for Hertfordshire

28 April 2020

Dear Colleagues,

RESPONSE TO THE HMICFRS HERTFORDSHIRE INSPECTION REPORT FOR POLICE CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES 2019

This report was published in March 2020 and the inspection took place in September of last year.

I received a report for consideration by my team from the Chief Constable this month to meet the statutory response times and this will be considered by my Strategic Executive Board in May so I can discuss the findings with the Chief Constable and his team and add to his perception of the report.

The report helpfully coupled the main points and recommendations from the national report published the previous month with those for Hertfordshire. I am pleased to note that the HMICFRS report identifies the clear strategic commitment to protection of vulnerable people from my police and crime plan and from the Chief Constable and his senior leadership team. It is also pleasing to see that partner organisations contacted by HMICFRS also recognised the strong joint working in this area to obtain the best possible outcomes. I intend to share the report and my thoughts on its contents with the key partners to ensure progress continues to be made.

The area of safeguarding vulnerable victims of crime as well as vulnerable people who come into contact with the criminal justice system as witnesses or suspects or missing persons has received much attention over the past few years in my plans and the Chief Constable's operational planning and this is also recognised in the report. It is encouraging to note the report's findings that the staffing levels in the safeguarding command are good and the managers and staff in the command are highly motivated and innovative.

The report did however identify shortcomings and this I also welcome because this is used by the constabulary as a tool to improve and by me as part of my holding to account role. Child protection is one of the specific functions identified in the 2011 Act for me to hold the Chief Constable to account on.

I will set out the recommendations as I am required to indicate my response to each of them.

Immediately, the force should review the effectiveness of the public protection unit.

Action was taken immediately after the inspection field work and I am advised that the management team has been refreshed and ways of working reviewed to meet this recommendation. I will seek an update on progress at appropriate intervals.

Within 3 months the force should ensure children's views and comments are recorded together with their demeanour and behaviour to influence decisions made.

Some immediate actions have been taken to introduce better training for those who will interact with children. In addition work with other forces is being explored to identify improvements. I intend to ask the Chief Constable to report on training particularly when he next provides me with a report on the discharge of his child protection functions, due later this year.

Within 6 months the constabulary should review referral pathways.

I intend to seek the views of partner agencies when I hold my regular meetings with their representatives. I will also be receiving progress reports on work to achieve this recommendation every quarter.

Within 6 months child protection investigations should be improved by providing guidance on responses and actions, allocating cases to appropriately trained staff, ensuring adequate supervision and auditing the quality, timeliness and supervision of investigations.

Improvements have already been made and other forces contacted to share best practice. Again, I will be reviewing progress with my regular monitoring reports.

Within 3 months the force should issue guidance and take steps to ensure when children are taken into police protection their voice is heard, strategy discussions are held, proper records are held and police stations are not improperly used as places of safety.

Actions have already been taken to review processes. In the absence of suitable provision by partner agencies the police have to rely on the police estate in many cases to safeguard children. Some investment has taken place to provide suitable non-custody type accommodation in the police estate to meet this recommendation.

Within 3 months a skills audit should be carried out to assess training requirements for specialist officers without previous detective or child care experience.

— David Lloyd —
**Police and Crime
Commissioner**
for Hertfordshire

This has been completed although it will need reviewing from time to time. This will also feature in the report I will request on training requirements for child protection functions.

I receive regular reports on progress to ensure this investment is sufficient. The full report can be found on the HMICFRS website or by following this link:

<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/hertfordshire-national-child-protection-inspection.pdf>

Yours sincerely,

