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Our Ref: - PCC18 11/74

Your Ref: - Mental Health Report

15th January 2019

HMICFRS and HOME OFFICE
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Dear Inspector / Minister,

As the Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire, under the requirements of Section 55(1) of the Police Act 1996, I am providing the following response to both 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) and the 'Secretary of State for the Home Office' in respect of the national report produced by HMICFRS 'Policing and Mental Health – Picking up the Pieces' that was released on the 28th November 2018.

1. Local Policing Body's Comments

I welcome the report and would like to convey my thanks to HMICFRS for its production. The report expressed clear concerns over whether the police should be involved in responding to mental health problems, but found that when they did so, officers were *"supportive, considerate and compassionate"*. However, according to the Inspectorate: *"Too many aspects of the broader mental health system are broken; the police are left to pick up the pieces... there isn't nearly enough emphasis on early intervention and primary care to prevent the need for a crisis response. This is letting down people with mental health problems, as well as placing an intolerable burden on police officers and staff. It is a national crisis which should not be allowed to continue; there needs to be a fundamental rethink and urgent action."*

This report highlights in stark terms the significant demand that mental health places on the police, who are most often not the most appropriate agency to respond. People experiencing a mental health crisis need expert support from medical professionals, but at the moment this

is often not available, so as a 24/7 emergency service, the police are left to pick up the pieces. This contributes further to the demand on officers – who are not trained mental health professionals – and diverts resources away from frontline policing activity.

I therefore support the Inspectorate's calls for a fundamental rethink on mental health provision, but I am also pleased to see the acknowledgement in the report of the good leadership and governance shown in this area by the police service.

Improving the situation here in Warwickshire is something that I and the Chief Constable have been working hard on for some time and an enhanced triage system, which would see mental health professionals working closely with Warwickshire Police, is close to finalisation. This will be a positive step to assisting officers when they do encounter people with mental health difficulties, to ensure that the correct support and provision can be made.

Equally, I have been encouraged by the willingness of the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust to join the county's Blue Light Emergency Services Collaboration Board alongside police, fire, ambulance and County Council colleagues, so we can explore further options for working more closely together.

The Government's recent announcement of increased investment in mental health support services is also very welcome news. I hope this will play its part in reducing the unsustainable demand currently being placed on the police service by ensuring that people in mental health difficulties receive appropriate early interventions to prevent them from ever reaching a crisis point.

2. Comments from the Chief Constable

Warwickshire Police welcomes the report and supports the recommendations contained within and is already carrying out work relating to these recommendations.

The first recommendation relates to the NPCC lead for mental health and the College of Policing drafting and agreeing to a new national definition of mental health (by January 2019), which all forces should adopt as soon as reasonably practicable. Warwickshire Police is supportive and will await the new definition. The fifth recommendation is for the Crisis Care Concordat steering group to carry out a fundamental review of the overall state response to mental health provision by 30th September 2019.

In relation to the remaining three recommendations, it is the intention of Warwickshire Police to adopt all within the suggested timescales. The following work is currently being undertaken

by Warwickshire Police regarding mental health provision, listed under each of these recommendations: -

Recommendation 2

By December 2019, forces should develop a better understanding of their mental health data, and the nature and scale of their demand. All forces should carry out a 24-hour snapshot exercise, using the new national definition of mental ill-health in Recommendation 1. This would help them see where their mental health demand is concentrated and identify any gaps in their data. The NPCC mental health lead should set out how the data was collected during the Welsh forces' snapshot exercise.

Current Warwickshire Position

- Whilst developing the proposals for a Warwickshire triage service, work was carried out which involved retrieving performance data through the force's 'Assurance & Service Improvement' department in relation to detentions under Section 136 Mental Health Act 1983 and total incidents (as a total and also split north and south of the county) that were classed as mental health, or those that had a mental health marker on the STORM Command and Control system. This was further split by hours of the day and days of the week so we could assess peak periods of demand across the force at various times in order to target triage more effectively.
- This was numerical data only, there were no descriptors for the incidents.
- So this was data to guide triage which was very useful for the purposes for which we needed it but was not a 24 hour snapshot.
- Warwickshire Police will await the NPCC mental health lead's guidance in relation to how the data was collected by the Welsh forces and will then carry out a 24hr snap shot.

Recommendation 3

By August 2019, all forces should review their existing partnership mental health triage services to assess their effectiveness, and the environment they are operating in. This will help them make decisions about sustainable future services with partners to make sure mental health care needs are being met. If forces find any deficiencies in their triage services, they should take steps to address them as soon as reasonably practicable.

Current Warwickshire position: -

- There are proposals in development at present with reference to a triage function to be established between Warwickshire Police and Coventry & Warwickshire Partnership Trust (CWPT). The model proposed is likely to consist of a police officer with additional mental health training alongside a mental health practitioner. They will be co-

located amongst Patrol officers to build relations and will offer advice, guidance and a sign-posting function alongside a responsive function where appropriate. It is likely this will be based in North Warwickshire due to the funding arrangements through the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The proposal requires CCG funding, which is expected to be supported at the end of January 2019.

Recommendation 4

By August 2019, all forces should review their mental health training programmes, using the College of Policing learning standards, to establish whether they are giving their officers the right tools to understand and respond to people with mental health problems.

Current Warwickshire position: -

- Improving training around mental health. A suicide awareness package has been agreed with CWPT to be delivered to front-line supervisors in Warwickshire starting in January.
- Developing a guide to mental health for front-line practitioners. A mental health guide, specific to Warwickshire has recently been written and finalised and will shortly be distributed to front-line staff.
- This training will be compliant with the Codes of Practice learning standards.

These recommendations will be placed on the HMICFRS 'tracker' and will be overseen through the 'Warwickshire Police HMICFRS Assurance Board'.

3. Any comments from the local policing body on the CC's comments.

The Chief Constable is supportive of the report and the recommendations contained within and has provided his assurance that the recommendations will be implemented within the suggested timescales. I also welcome the work that is already being conducted to improve the police response to mental health within Warwickshire and will monitor the progress made in achieving the report's recommendations and realising the force's aspiration of being '*Great at protecting the most vulnerable*'.

This response will be published on the website of the Warwickshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) within the proscribed 56 day timeframe starting from the day on which the report was published.

Yours sincerely,

Philp Seccombe. TD

Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner