



Philip Seccombe
Police and Crime
Commissioner
for Warwickshire

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Our Ref: - PCC20 02/117
Your Ref: - Warwickshire IPA

27th March 2020

Dear Inspector / Minister,

As the Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire, I am providing the following response to 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 HMICFRS report 'National Child Protection Inspection - 2019 thematic report' that was published on the 27th February 2020. This action is pursuant to my obligations under Section 55(1) of the Police Act 1996.

1. LOCAL POLICING BODY'S COMMENTS

I welcome the Inspectorate's examination of this critical area of protection and note the report's comments that since the last thematic inspection in 2015, there is now unambiguous commitment from police leaders, officers and staff to the protection of children. The inspection also found improvements in the service received by children at risk and that signs of vulnerability are more effectively recognised, and the assessment of risk is generally better. In addition, partnership working has matured and the quality of multi-agency planning and decision making has improved. This has resulted in improvements in the outcomes for some, though not all, of the most vulnerable children.

The report also identified that to achieve the best possible outcomes for children, leaders in all agencies need to come together to form clear local strategies to reduce risk and protect children at risk from abuse and exploitation. These arrangements require the three safeguarding partners, the chief officer of each force being one, to join up and achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families by ensuring targeted services are delivered to meet their needs in a local area in a co-ordinated manner. Police leaders must 'raise their gaze and embrace'.

A number of recommendations were consequently made in the report, and in response to those issues that have been identified for the police service to remedy I have received the following comments from the Chief Constable.

2. COMMENTS FROM THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

Warwickshire Police are committed to protecting people from harm and have an ambition of being 'great at protecting the most vulnerable'. We welcome the findings of the report and will now work to look at making any changes necessary.

We already have a robust system of self-review in place and have been making progress in relation to improving our response to child protection with the formation of our Child Abuse, Trafficking and Exploitation (CATE) team.

Recommendations

1. We recommend that chief constables take steps to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children. Such steps could include (but don't need to be limited to) considering fully a child's circumstances when making decisions; more effective use of legislation to discontinue prosecutions not in the public (or child's) interest; the development of more effective non-criminal justice pathways for vulnerable children who commit lower level crimes.
2. We recommend that chief constables should review performance management and quality assurance approaches to ensure that assessments of the nature and quality of decision making are routinely made. The purpose of this would be to reinforce the understanding that compliance with policy or process is only one part of effective practice.
3. We recommend that chief constables on those forces not yet inspected by the NCPI or JTAI take steps to identify and implement good practice and the learning highlighted from these programmes. This may include engaging with those forces who have been inspected, direct contact with the HMICFRS child protection lead or participating in a regional or national learning event.

Warwickshire Police accept all of the recommendations and will seek to make improvements against them where this is deemed necessary. This improvement will be led by the force's Vulnerability Superintendent and tracked through the Vulnerability and Safeguarding Board, which in turn will report into the Warwickshire Assurance Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable.

3. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE LOCAL POLICING BODY ON THE CC'S COMMENTS.

The Chief Constable is therefore supportive of the report and has provided his assurance that the recommendations will be addressed. I will scrutinise the progress made by Warwickshire Police in achieving these objectives and will both support and 'hold to account' the Chief Constable in doing so.

In my Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) I have a dedicated Development and Policy Lead for 'Vulnerability' matters and will ensure that the OPCC are fully engaged in supporting and coordinating the multi-agency response to the issues identified in the report.

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

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philp Secombe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'e'.

Philp Secombe. TD

Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner