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Office of the  
**Police & Crime  
Commissioner**  
West Yorkshire

My Reference: OPCC/MBW/NF

Your Reference:

28<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

**HMICFRS/HMCPSI Criminal Justice Joint Inspection: Evidence led domestic abuse prosecutions**

I am writing in response to the recent HMICFRS/HMCPSI Criminal Justice joint inspection on evidence-led domestic abuse prosecutions. As ever, we are grateful for the observations and recommendations outlined in the report.

The findings of this report have been of particular interest to me, not only as PCC, but also in my role as Chair of our Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). Tackling domestic abuse has been highlighted as a priority in my Police and Crime Plan since my election to this role in November 2012. Since then, notable activity by my office, West Yorkshire Police (WYP), and our partners to counter domestic abuse has included:

- The implementation of a Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework, targeted to achieve a swifter resolution to domestic abuse criminal justice cases and to lessen the burden on victims at court.
- 'Operation Encompass' – a project in co-ordination with schools to support children who have witnessed a domestic abuse incident within the first 24 hours.
- A £100k PCC grant to Bradford-based Affordable Legal Services, who provide advice to victims of domestic abuse who are not eligible for Legal Aid.
- £600k of Home Office funding for West Yorkshire Police to establish a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) Team.
- £200k allocated from my Partnership Executive Group (PEG) Fund to Wakefield Council to establish a Domestic Abuse Navigator Service, which will assist those affected by repeated incidents of domestic abuse by tackling mental health, homelessness, substance abuse and reoffending issues.
- My office's hosting of the West Yorkshire Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Panel; a body of professionals from the NHS, Crown Prosecution Service, Voluntary Sector, Local Authority and Education sectors, who review a randomly selected sample of West Yorkshire Police domestic abuse case files which did not result in a charge. The Panel assess whether appropriate action was taken to

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support the victim, with feedback on the cases promoting continuous improvement in the services provided by the police and partners.

The joint inspection makes a number of recommendations which are relevant to police forces; in particular regarding the training of safeguarding unit staff, the review of cases marked 'no further action', and having the correct processes in place to support evidence-led prosecutions. West Yorkshire Police is working toward these objectives through a number of streams of work:

- A commitment to evidence-led prosecutions has been established in the force's Domestic Abuse Strategic Plan through regular dip-sampling of investigations supported by the CPS domestic abuse scrutiny panel and my own OPCC independent domestic abuse scrutiny panel.
- Matters of staff welfare, training, appropriate allocation of cases, and embedding of best practice in domestic abuse investigations will be addressed through West Yorkshire Police's Safeguarding Review, which commenced at the close of 2019. This work aims to establish the current position within our safeguarding units in terms of workload demand, the capacity of staff to cope with this demand, and the capabilities needed for all roles. This work will then inform a business case which will be presented to the WYP Chief Officer Team later in the year.
- West Yorkshire Police has committed to improving the quality of investigations by initiating a detailed whole systems review of the victim's journey, from initial point of contact through to resolution. Within this, the over-arching purpose of the Domestic Abuse review is to improve the quality of service to victims across West Yorkshire.
- Initial work by the Review team has included site visits and workshops with safeguarding staff. These meetings explored challenges in recruitment, time available for investigative training, and barriers to efficiencies.
- Another important part of the business case development is to look at best practice in other forces, and WYP are engaging with GMP, the Met, and forces in Lancashire, Humberside and Merseyside to achieve this.

West Yorkshire Police's work to review safeguarding dovetails with further recommendations made following the 2018/19 PEEL inspection on investigative capacity and capability at WYP. Scrutiny of the resulting work will be an important aspect of my performance meetings with the Chief Constable in the months ahead and through our local collaboration structures.

Yours sincerely



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