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Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London
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15th April 2020

Dear *Priti*

Response to HMICFRS report – “National Child Protection Inspections”

Under Section 55(5) of the Police Act 1996, as Acting Police and Crime Commissioner I am pleased to provide my formal response to the HMICFRS’s report entitled. “National Child Protection Inspections 2019 Thematic Report”.

Both the Chief Constable and I welcome the publication of the HMICFRS’ report.

I will take further reassurance from the Chief Constable via my Board meeting in due course once the recommendations are in place given that it is for police forces themselves to implement the changes.

The HMICFRS recommendations are attached in Appendix 1

Yours sincerely

Ray Bisby
Acting Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
cc PCC@hmic.gsi.gov.uk

HMICFRS recommendations and constabulary response

Force response to the national recommendations:

- We recommend that the Home Office jointly with other government departments considers the development of a new national early help and prevention strategy to more effectively address the root causes of harm for vulnerable children. The purpose of such a strategy should be to ensure agencies work together as part of a coherent whole system approach to recognise and respond to the earliest indicators of risk and vulnerability in order to prevent escalating and cumulative trauma.

Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the Home Office. The Constabulary will await further information.

- We recommend that the Ministry of Justice and Department for Education undertake a review of the current provision of intermediaries and the extent to which social workers undertake interviews of children with the police.

Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the Ministry of Justice and Department for Education. The Constabulary will await further information.

- 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.

Force response: The Constabulary is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from criminal exploitation. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Missing Exploited Trafficked (MET) Hub work alongside partners in social care, health and education to engage with children believed to be at risk of, or currently being subjected to, exploitation to investigate and safeguard. This is a developing area across the partnership and work is ongoing to improve our understanding and response to exploitation, focusing on early intervention and prevention to reduce harm, and ensure that children are not unnecessarily criminalised.

- We recommend that the Home Office and Department for Education undertakes a review of the unnecessary detention of children. This review should include an assessment of the effectiveness of the 2017 National Custody Concordat, the provision of alternative accommodation, the provision of appropriate adult services and the use bail by the police.

Force response: This recommendation is addressed to the Home Office and Department for Education. The Constabulary will await further information.

- 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.

Force response: The Constabulary participates in regular multi-agency audits to scrutinise decision making in child protection matters and understand service delivery across the partnership, these include an assessment on the outcome for the child. The force also conducts regular internal audits through the Missing From Home and Domestic Abuse Scrutiny Groups, which include cases relating to child safeguarding, to identify good practice and learning needs. These processes will continue to be developed to ensure they capture ways in which decision making and child protection practice can improve.

- We recommend that chief constables of 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.

Force response: The Constabulary is using HMICFRS guidance to conduct a self-assessment of the effectiveness of the force and its response to child protection including leadership, management and governance, and the experiences, progress and outcomes for children.