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

My Reference: OPCC/MBW/JED

Your Reference:

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The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DP

Dear *Home Secretary*

I am writing to you in response to the HMIC report "In Harm's Way: The role of the police in keeping children safe" released in July 2015. This report summarises 21 HMIC inspections conducted between January 2014 and June 2015 on the police response to child protection issues. As noted in the report protecting children is one of the most important tasks the police undertake and is a top priority within my Police and Crime Plan and the primary strategic safeguarding objective for West Yorkshire Police (WYP). I continue to work closely with the Chief Constable, reviewing the police's response to child protection and using reports such as this to ensure that high-quality protection and safeguarding is delivered to all those who need it.

The reports set out in general terms the most frequently made recommendations from these inspections and my team and I are working closely with WYP and partners to serve the needs of vulnerable children. In furtherance of this I have now appointed a Safeguarding Coordinator who is working with WYP and partners across West Yorkshire to ensure that the approach is collective (multi agency), consistent, maintaining a real focus on safeguarding, prioritising CSE and improving the outcomes for victims. I continue to hold regular meetings with WYP and senior safeguarding partners to direct the funding I made available in 2014 to improve the response to child sexual exploitation in areas identified by this Partnership Executive Group (PEG). This work has already resulted in the commissioning of a series of awareness raising initiatives in schools across all five local authorities and an initiative to provide specialist foster care for victims of CSE. In addition, through this funding each of the local authorities have identified a single point of contact for CSE and missing data which my Safeguarding Coordinator will manage to ensure effective and accurate information sharing occurs across all partners and areas which is always a key issue.

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I am pleased to report that the specialist investigators recruited with the extra £1.5 million I made available last year have reviewed a large number of CSE cases and identified a number of offences and offenders, these investigations are still ongoing. I am confident these investigations will result in offenders being brought to justice and would be perpetrators disrupted, I'm sure this will be a focus for some time to come.

Improved communication and engagement with children is highlighted in the report and was contained in the HMIC Child Protection Inspection of WYP published in January 2015. This is a principle I am fully committed to and in addition to the youth advisory group 'Youth Voice Your PCC' I have formed, my office (WYOPCC) is currently exploring with WYP, partners and third sector organisations how we can discover new ways of hearing the child's voice as to their experience during an investigation.

WYP has just undergone a College of Policing peer review on CSE and a HMIC thematic inspection on vulnerability and although these reports have not yet been published, the College of Policing report is due very shortly. The HMIC thematic report is not due until February 2016 and the initial feedback has been very positive and demonstrates the progress WYP and my office (WYOPCC) have made recently. As WYP and I have demonstrated we are keen to use these reports to develop and improve our service delivery and for me to hold the Chief constable to account, however, it would be helpful if the reports could be published in a swifter time period to reflect better more recent work and activity in a fast moving world.

This HMIC report rightly recognises the huge pressures on resources created by the increased reporting of new cases of abuse and also dealing with significant resourcing issues and increase of non-recent cases being recorded. Despite these increased demands against a backdrop of the financial challenges I wrote to you about in September 2014 the Chief Constable and I are working closely and are dedicated to protecting vulnerable people, especially children. As Sir Tom Winsor HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary stated in his speech on the 1st July 2015 "the vulnerability of people to crime is at the heart of what policing is about". I can reassure you that preventing and protecting the vulnerable in our communities is definitely at the heart of WYP and the OPCC for West Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely



Mark Burns-Williamson
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire