



Mark Burns-Williamson OBE
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire
Ploughland House
62 George Street
Wakefield WF1 1DL



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

My Reference: OPCC/MBW/JED

Your Reference:

21 July 2015

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

Dear Home Secretary

I am writing in response to the HMIC report "Online and on the edge: Real risks in a virtual world" published in July 2015. The report recognises "the power of the internet, its accessibility and its ease of use has transformed the way in which we all behave" but also identifies threat, risk and harm to society through the taking, possessing and distribution of indecent images of children as well as children being groomed on line and importantly the risk from perpetrators of committing contact offences against children in person. I continue to recognise the growing threat from crime perpetrated online and the response is within West Yorkshire's Police and Crime plan. I made £3.5 million of extra funding available in 2014 for the police to increase capacity to deal with child sexual exploitation (CSE), human trafficking and cyber-crime that includes funding for 30 specialist child abuse investigators and a dedicated human trafficking unit within West Yorkshire Police (WYP). I have provided an additional £440,000 for partnership innovations against CSE across the county with a great deal of working co-ordinated and facilitated by my office (WYOPCC) with the recent appointment of a Safeguarding Coordinator who reports directly to me and the CSE West Yorkshire Strategy group.

WYP are currently preparing a full action plan in consultation with my office and partners to directly address the 13 recommendations of the report. This action plan will complement the CSE action plan already in place which is under currently under review in the light of other recently published HMIC reports (In Harm's Way, July 2015; National Child Protection Inspections January 2015) and a College of Policing peer review conducted in June 2015 of WYP. WYP Abusive Images unit have commenced specialist internet intelligence research in conjunction with the National Crime Agency (NCA) to identify offenders in West Yorkshire who are sharing indecent images of children across the internet. As you are aware we are developing here in the WYOPCC a comprehensive online safeguarding platform to help keep our children safe.

Tel No: 01924 294000

Email: markburns-williamson@westyorkshire.pcc.pnn.gov.uk

Fax No: 01924 294008


www.westyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk

/Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner @WestYorksOPCC

Prevention through awareness and hearing the child's voice are key to combatting this type of crime. In furtherance of this I support the ongoing campaigns of "Know the signs" and "Do you know who you are talking to". Additionally the West Yorkshire CSE Strategy group managed by the newly appointed Safeguarding Coordinator have approved a partnership agreed online campaign to raise awareness of the risks and consequences of "sexting" amongst children and young people. These campaigns have utilised young person's focus groups to improve our communication with children so they are better able to protect themselves online. Additionally my office is currently exploring with the police, partners and third sector organisations how we can discover new ways of hearing the child's voice as to their experience during an investigation.

This is a changing landscape for society and policing and it is recognised that such changes have a huge impact on the available resources (something I hope the Funding Formula review will recognise) and also as this HMIC reports identifies, the welfare of staff involved. A comprehensive review of safeguarding was conducted in late 2014 early 2015 by WYP leading to the restructure and reorganisation of police safeguarding units across West Yorkshire and the strengthening of multi-agency teams in all five districts to improve coordination and efficiency. The proposed action plan under development seeks to address the welfare of staff as recommended in this HMIC report. The challenges we face are not underestimated, however, the positive actions and innovation being taken forward, demonstrate the collective desire and commitment to dealing with the "real risks in a virtual world".

Yours sincerely



Mark Burns-Williamson
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire