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

My Reference: OPCC/MBW/NF

Your Reference:

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Dear Home Secretary,

HMICFRS Report: National Child Protection Inspections 2019 thematic report

I am writing in response to February's National Child Protection inspection report. In this report, the Inspectorate commented on common issues identified through their national programme of inspection of police services. Child Protection services at West Yorkshire Police were last inspected in 2016.

The safeguarding of children is clearly an essential aspect of any police force's work. I have long recognised the importance of these issues by identifying child sexual abuse as a key priority in my Police and Crime Plan, and within my overall Plan outcome of 'safeguarding vulnerable people'.

My office, West Yorkshire Police, and our partners, have made important contributions toward protecting the wellbeing of children and young people in the county. Recent achievements have included:

- The 'Domestic Abuse Hurts Your Children Too' campaign, led by WYP.¹
- Retaining a Safeguarding Advisor role within my office to promote partnership in the county's work to prevent and tackle child abuse and exploitation.
- Providing a £36,000 grant to help further develop the *Mr. Shapeshifter* animation, a free resource that is available and specifically designed to safeguard children from online exploitation and abuse.
- Supporting a major partnership event in Birmingham, which brought together 250 specialists from across the country to focus on improving the response to protecting children from exploitation and abuse. The event was delivered by the Modern Slavery Police Transformation Programme (MSPTP) with

¹ More information at: <https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/advice/abuse-anti-social-behaviour/domestic-abuse/domestic-abuse-affects-your-children-too/domestic-abuse-affects-your-children-too>

key support from this office in my role as APCC national lead on Modern Slavery and human trafficking.

- Attending the 2019 launch event for the annual 'Childhood Vulnerability Report', published by the Children's Commissioner for England, Anne Longfield, and;
- Our annual *Safeguarding Week*, where local safeguarding boards, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), my office, and West Yorkshire Police hold workshops and events aimed at informing the public and practitioners on how best to protect vulnerable children and adults across the county.

This HMICFRS report highlighted three recommendations relevant to police forces; West Yorkshire Police's actions in response are outlined below:

Reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of children.

West Yorkshire is a pilot area for the Ministry of Justice deferred prosecution model, 'Chance to Change' (C2C). C2C offers an alternative to a Youth Conditional Caution (YCC) to deter young people from entering the criminal justice system and gaining a criminal record. This programme of early intervention sees young people enter into a contract similar to that of a YCC. If they complete their programme of intervention successfully, they will avoid a criminal conviction and the potential negative impact on their future life chances. C2C went live in Leeds in January 2020, with extension to Bradford planned for the summer.

Reviewing the management and assessment of the quality of child protection decision-making.

West Yorkshire Police have an established Safeguarding Central Governance Unit (SCGU), which has the responsibility for undertaking internal audit and inspection to promote continuous improvement in safeguarding.

Audit findings and recommendations are relayed to the Force's district strategic leads, who are subsequently held to account at the Force's Strategic Safeguarding Board.

The SCGU have recently worked to improve procedures relating to child exploitation, child neglect, and police attendance at Initial Case Conferences.

Upcoming audits will look at the cumulative effect of harm on children in domestic abuse cases, and whether this harm is considered holistically; responding to a child's lived experience, rather than examining a series of individual incidents.

As part of this effort, West Yorkshire Police are currently looking at how it can better identify children who are placed on Child Protection Plans, to highlight those children who have already experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences.

On steps to identify and implement good practice and learning.

There are several recent examples of work where WYP have received inputs from specialists in child safeguarding, or have promoted learning to others.

In September 2019 West Yorkshire Police, in conjunction with the Lucy Faithful Foundation, hosted a regional learning event on tackling the viewing of indecent images of children online, which included inputs from the *Stop it Now* campaign and the Internet Watch Foundation.

Also in February 2019, West Yorkshire Police hosted an event with a leading trauma specialist to help develop officers' and partners' knowledge of Adverse Childhood

Experiences, and what an effective trauma-informed response should look like. Over two, days 400 officers, staff, and partners attended the events.

Improvements made in the speed of examination of digital devices for indecent images.

West Yorkshire Police's Digital Forensic Unit (DFU) is in the process of increasing the number of staff in the department, which has enabled the department to restructure. The objective is to reduce the average turnaround time for an Indecent Images of Children case from the present position to 1 month, and eliminate all but specialist outsourcing. This is being achieved through extra local priority investment as a result of raising more funds through the police precept and agreed as part of my overall budget setting process.

Finally, as I have highlighted in my recent response to the 2018/19 PEEL inspection, WYP are also conducting a force-wide Safeguarding Review. This will assess the allocations policy across our five districts to ensure that crimes involving vulnerable people are being investigated by officers and staff with the appropriate safeguarding skills.

I will continue to review West Yorkshire Police's efforts to meet the challenges faced in strengthening our child protection and safeguarding processes in the months ahead, (in particular through my Community Outcomes and Delivery Quarterly meetings with the Chief Constable), as a matter of considerable importance to the communities of West Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely



Mark Burns-Williamson
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire