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**BEV HUGHES**

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**DEPUTY MAYOR  
OF GREATER  
MANCHESTER**

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Rt Hon Priti Patel,  
Secretary of State for the Home Department  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020

Dear Home Secretary

**SUBJECT: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Crime and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS)  
Thematic Spotlight Report - A call for help; police contact management through call handling  
and control rooms in 2018/19**

I write in response to the recent HMICFRS report that reviewed police contact management through call handling and control rooms.

Ensuring that the public can contact the police easily in their time of need is of paramount importance. The police call centres are the front door for many people and in order to maintain trust and confidence in the system it is crucial that there is sufficient funding and resources to ensure this function can operate efficiently and effectively.

During serious and large scale events, it is expected that calls for service will increase, placing increased pressure and demand on police call centres. Indeed we have seen such occurrences in Greater Manchester in recent years. It is therefore important to carefully predict and map demand, as far as is possible, to ensure the function does not become overwhelmed. This will continue to be a significant challenge for the service.

Despite this, I was pleased to see positive references throughout the report that the service can collectively learn and build from. This included the emphasis on collaborative partnership working and the ability of the service to provide a focus on staff wellbeing and career pathways for promotion, something that we continue to foster within Greater Manchester.

The report identifies a number of areas for improvement across the service and I shall respond to these in turn below.

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**HMICFRS Area for Improvement 1 - Each force must be sure it effectively assesses risk at all points of contact with the public and the community. It should use this assessment to provide the best response to vulnerability.**

In Greater Manchester we seek to identify and act upon vulnerability risk within each of our contact points, including the call centres, LiveChat and the Single Online Home. Whilst the latter does not allow for direct contact with the member of the public, the ability to triage the content using specific questions remains to help identify vulnerability. The existing STRIVE model, used to identify vulnerability risk, will be extended in 2021 to include all calls from the public into the control rooms, at the first point of contact.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was imperative to ensure local policing could adapt to meet the unprecedented demands on the business but also on individual staff. I was pleased to support Greater Manchester Police (GMP) with the quick response to enable call handlers to receive 101 calls while working remotely and safely at home, maintaining the minimum standards of service throughout. To be able to prioritise the most vulnerable members of our communities, additional functionality within the communications systems has been introduced to enable calls to be expedited for safeguarding action from key partners including the NHS and Children's Care Homes. This approach has been successful and has become a routine operational process.

**HMICFRS Area for Improvement 2 - Each force where there is a vulnerability desk should make sure it makes a positive contribution to initial safeguarding.**

This is an area that GMP has reviewed and will be restructuring over the coming months to ensure consistency. I believe that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and work will continue to mainstream this throughout the Operational Communications Branch.

**HMICFRS Area for Improvement 3 - Each force should make sure its staff are trained, supervised and supported to be effective in their control room roles; this should include assessing the effect of better terms and conditions and career development for control room staff.**

Following the recent development of a new training programme, supervisors are now receiving training on topics including performance management, absence management, welfare and wellbeing, and the development of staff. Whilst Continuous Professional Development (CPD) continues to be a challenge at present due to existing structures and the levels of demand, I understand that work has commenced to review existing shift patterns to identify opportunities to enhance opportunities for CPD sessions and briefings. COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to think more creatively about how training is delivered, with some modules to be delivered online.

The ability to attract the right staff into GMP and to offer them a platform to build a successful career is of utmost importance. Through a redesign of the assessment process for selecting control room staff, GMP will look to provide a focus on an applicants values, leadership and motivation for public service. This work will be monitored closely to assess the impact on morale, sickness and turnover, which I hope to see improve across the board.

In addition, I want to build on the positive work undertaken to take to actively promote career development officers and staff. It is encouraging to see that apprentices within the Control Rooms are converting their temporary placements into substantive roles, with every apprentice gaining a permanent role within the Operational Communications Branch in 2019/20. Work will also continue to promote clear progression opportunities to supervision and management and to review other schemes and models around leadership and line management.

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Finally, I remain supportive of the Diversity Forum in place which enables staff from underrepresented groups at all levels the opportunity to shape the direction of the diversity strategy to facilitate practical and meaningful changes to policy and practice.

**HMICFRS Area for Improvement 4 - We expect forces to invest in technology and work with each other to use it to inform and improve their risk assessments, their responses and their investigations to keep the public safe.**

The Chief Constable and I remain committed to ensuring GMP is at the forefront of technological innovation to better deliver public safety for our communities.

Our force-wide Integrated Operational Policing System (iOPS) includes functionality to support call handlers to make risk-based decisions with the immediate access to person-based information and the ability to share incident data across police borders.

Additionally, investment continues to be committed in the control centre technical infrastructure to enable the effective use of interactive voice response (IVR) and the integration of social media and digital channels into the crime recording and incident management system.

**HMICFRS Area for Improvement 5 - We expect all forces to make sure the service they provide to their communities meets the new national contact management strategy. We will assess how well forces adopt the contact management principles and practice as well as the learning standards during PEEL 2020/21.**

The existing Contact Management Strategy for GMP is based on the principles of the National Contact Management Strategy, so will conform to the expected practices.

**HMICFRS Area for Improvement 6 - We expect to see all 43 forces get involved in the single online home and the social media projects.**

The volume of contact received via online channels continues to grow at pace. The implementation of the Single Online Home has been embraced fully in Greater Manchester, with GMP taking the lead to trial the online reporting of Anti-Social Behaviour on behalf of UK policing. GMP was also the first policing area implement the LiveChat as a contact route and continue to evaluate the efficacy of the system across different crime types.

In respect of social media, and the ability to make a crime report through these channels, GMP continues to review this work with the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council. This work will also consider the requirements of developing the technology to integrate online reporting with existing police systems.

In the meantime, my office will continue to support work to develop a public communications campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of using these online routes to report crimes to the GMP.

Yours sincerely



**Rt. Hon Baroness Beverley Hughes  
Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester  
Policing, Crime and Criminal Justice**

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