

BEV HUGHES
DEPUTY MAYOR
OF GREATER
MANCHESTER

Rt Hon Priti Patel,
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
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14th June 2021

Dear Home Secretary

HMICFRS Inspection: Policing in the pandemic - The police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020.

I write in response to the recent HMICFRS inspection report on policing in the pandemic. I would like to reiterate my thanks and admiration at the outset to the brave police officers and staff who have continued to demonstrate their dedication and commitment throughout the pandemic.

The last 18 months has presented some of the most challenging times in recent policing history and it was reassuring to note that the HMICFRS inspection report had found some very effective and swift practice taken in response to the pandemic and the handling of a national lockdown. Of particular note within the report was the coherent communication between the police and the public to ensure a wide reach of important messaging. In addition, the pandemic created a need for new technology which I believe can be maintained and developed further to seek more effective and efficient practices in the future.

The report identified five recommendations for the police service. I can respond to these as follows:

Recommendation: Managing registered sex offenders - Forces must immediately make sure that officers understand and correctly implement the guidance for managing registered sex offenders during the pandemic.

All registered sex offenders within Greater Manchester are managed by the Force's Sex Offender Management Unit (SOMU). The SOMU has devised and implemented specific pandemic-related guidance for the management of registered sex offenders which all SOMU staff have been briefed on. The guidance seeks to balance the safety of colleagues and the public in relation to the threat of viral transmission, with the legal requirement to manage the sexual risk posed by the registered sex offender cohort. I understand the SOMU has worked closely with other agencies to ensure that the services provided to the public have not been detrimentally affected by the pandemic.

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Recommendation: Legislation and guidance - Forces must immediately make sure they can manage their responses to changes in coronavirus-related legislation. They must ensure frontline officers and staff are clear about the difference between legislation and guidance.

I am aware that the pace of legislative change around COVID-19 has caused some misinterpretation regarding its relation with the Human Rights Act. It is therefore critical that police officers and staff receive clear and up to date information to help inform their duties. There is a clear need for a national hub to assist with the dissemination of this information and I am pleased that Operation Talla continues to support that function.

Throughout the pandemic, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) has had a dedicated planning team for public order and public safety operations. This team is closely aligned to the COVID-19 Silver Team, led by a dedicated Strategic and Tactical Commander. I am aware that when regulations and guidance change, the COVID-19 Silver Team liaises with the Public Order Planning Team and disseminates any national updates from Operation Talla.

Officers deployed specifically to public order and public safety operations are provided with a bespoke operational briefing at the start of each shift. This contains all relevant regulations and national guidance which clearly identifies the current legislation and the current guidance, with particular attention drawn to any amendments.

In addition, GMP's intranet pages have been kept updated with roadmap changes, frequently asked questions and other useful information. The COVID-19 Coordination Hub has regular meetings with districts to ensure clarity and questions can be raised in respect of any new legislation.

I understand GMP liaises with network of legal officers both within local authorities and in GMP's own legal team, who regularly discuss and interpret the legislation, whilst having good links with Operation Talla who also provide clarity and guidance.

Recommendation: Test, Track and Trace - Forces must immediately put in place a policy to make sure that they follow the guidance and self-isolation directions when members of the workforce come into contact with someone with coronavirus symptoms.

GMP has a Test and Trace Strategy and a Standard Operating Procedure that details responsibilities and referral pathways when members of the workforce come into contact with someone with coronavirus symptoms. I understand that all Test and Trace investigations are recorded and maintained on a secure database. GMP is represented at the Greater Manchester Contact Tracing Design and Engage Group Meetings which highlight any change in national policy and procedure, and ensure the GMP response is immediate and effective. I am aware also that a training package has been designed to enable new staff to be trained effectively in Track and Trace investigations, should further resilience be required.

Recommendation: Custody Records - Forces must immediately make sure that they clearly and consistently record on custody records information about how/when/if detainees are informed of the temporary changes to how they can exercise their rights to legal advice and representation. The record must make clear how any consents are obtained about the way in which legal advice and representation are provided.

I understand that custody sergeants were reminded about the importance of obtaining and documenting consent in November 2020. In April 2021, custody inspectors were asked to undertake checks to confirm that this was happening locally. This matter has now been added to the monthly dip-sampling process by inspectors. All cases where solicitors represent suspects virtually are added to the daily rolling log and checked by the inspector to ensure that consents are obtained and recorded. On

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occasions where this hasn't been completed, direct feedback is given to the custody sergeant concerned for review and learning.

Recommendation: Overall scale and impact of changes - Within six months, forces must assess the sustainability of any temporary measures introduced during the pandemic that change the way they work. They must understand positive, negative and unintended consequences of the scale and impact of the changes before determining if any of these new ways of working should continue.

GMP is already planning for the next stage of the pandemic. Under the 'Working Safely' theme GMP will consider how the local service will recover and adapt in the longer term; how and where teams will work in the future; and what the Force estate footprint will look like.

This work will include the development of new strategies for estates, human resources and IT, drawing upon the experiences and opportunities presented through lockdown. This work will include assessments from other organisations to understand what good practice and learning can be incorporated into future models. The success of this work will depend largely on having an effective consultation and communications plan to ensure the workforce are included and listened to at each step.

The inspection report also makes a number of learning points for the police service. I have reviewed these and will continue to monitor the progress and action taken.

Yours sincerely



Rt. Hon Baroness Beverley Hughes
Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime

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