

**ANDY
BURNHAM**

**MAYOR OF
GREATER
MANCHESTER**

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

9th August, 2021

Our Ref:

Dear Home Secretary,

**SUBJECT: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Crime and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS)
Thematic Report – Review of Policing DA During the C-19 Pandemic**

I write in response to the recent HMICFRS report that reviewed the policing of domestic abuse during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Firstly, I would like to say I welcome this report and the review of the policing response to domestic abuse during Covid-19. As we are all aware the ongoing pandemic has had a significant impact on domestic abuse victims and improving the response to victims is key. In Greater Manchester support services have reported increases in demand and complexity to the domestic abuse cases they are seeing, and we have been and continue to monitor this.

In Greater Manchester our Gender Based Violence Strategy has recently been out for consultation and tackling domestic abuse and improving the police's response to domestic abuse are key priorities within the strategy. This will be the document which drives our response to Gender Based Violence over the next 10 years. In improving our response to domestic abuse, we will also be taking into consideration the findings of the GM Inequalities Commission and looking at the impact of domestic abuse through this lens, taking a whole system approach to tackling it, as no one agency can tackle this alone.

I was pleased to see within the report positive references to work undertaken by GMP, for instance the approach taken by Greater Manchester Police and local probation services to the offender management of domestic abuse perpetrators, Operation Mantle and the GMP Facebook Live sessions were all highlighted as good practice.

The report identifies a number of recommendations for police services, and I shall respond to these in turn below.

HMICFRS recommendation 1

- **That if forces continue to adopt online contact methods in respect of victims of domestic abuse, they should immediately introduce an effective supervision and monitoring framework. The framework should assess the suitability of such contact**

methods, ensuring that victim needs are at the forefront of decisions around their use and appropriate onward action is taken in all cases.

- **That forces immediately review their use of a telephone-based initial response to any domestic abuse incidents and crimes and ensure that it is in accordance with the strict parameters set out by the College of Policing.**

GMP have two main online contact methods that the public can use to contact them. These are the Live Chat function and Single Online Home. All reports of domestic abuse received through Live Chat are triaged by an operator who has received THRIVE training and are responded to in accordance with GMP's Crime and Incident reporting procedure and Incident response policy. It is also important to stress that the amount of DA reported through this function is on average .5% of the volume of all live chats.

GMP also commenced the use of Single Online Home for the reporting of domestic abuse incidents in June 2021. This has been implemented as part of a national roll out following the successful evaluation of the pilot which took place in five forces. I am assured that all reports of domestic abuse through Single Online Home are triaged by the system and that once reports are received in the Operation Communications Branch, a member of staff uses the THRIVE model to assess the threat, harm, risk, and vulnerability before allocating the report to a member of staff. Again, reports are responded to in accordance with GMP's current Crime and Incident Recording Procedure and Incident Response Policy and the appropriate safeguards are in place.

HMICFRS recommendation 2

- **That forces immediately review their capacity to provide ongoing support and safeguarding to victims of domestic abuse whose case is awaiting trial at court.**

This is an area we have recognised as a high priority in Greater Manchester. Face-to-face services were resumed by HMCTS in June 2021 and His Honour Judge Dean recently announced a recovery strategy for the Greater Manchester Crown Courts. As part of this strategy, resources have been ring-fenced to focus specifically on the back-log of cases as well as current cases to ensure that there isn't a continuous cycle of back-log.

Since March 2020, there has been continuous communication between service-providers which has identified that delays and adjournments have resulted in victims requiring support for extended periods of time. As a result, Victims' Services Coordinators within GMP have been working with investigating officers in relation to the ongoing management and development of Victim Strategies, including making arrangements for the police and support services to meet regularly to review the circumstances and risk to each victim and then agree a continuing support plan. As of July 2021, there are currently eight live strategies which are supporting over 100 victims. In addition, GMP's Witness Care Units are continuing to manage the expectations of victims and witnesses in light of the back-logs so preparations can be made in case of delays or adjournments, including what impact this may have and what additional support can be put into place.

GMP are also undertaking a review of the journey that victims go through within the Criminal Justice System. This work includes an exploration into how effective those involved are in the coordinating of the response to a victim's needs. The early indications of this review are that caseloads remain high, cases are often adjourned or moved to a new court location at short notice, and there are gaps in the coordination between elements of the Criminal Justice System. This work

is being overseen by the Victim Services Assessment Silver meeting and it is proposed that further discussions on this are brought to the Victim Services Improvement Board.

HMICFRS recommendation 3

- **That all forces immediately review their use of outcome 15, outcome 16, and evidence-led prosecutions.**

Following the HMICFRS Victims Services Assessment Review work had already commenced within GMP to review the use of outcomes 15 and 16 and evidence led prosecutions. GMP's Public Protection Governance Unit has been leading this review.

Initial findings from this review have found that the use of Outcome 15B has increased from 8.1% to 12.6% from July 2019 to June 2021 and the use of outcome 16 has fallen from 69.9% to 48.6% from July 2019 to June 2021. This indicates a positive downward trend in the use of outcome 16, but we recognise that there is still much more to do to understand the use of outcomes 15 and 16.

To support looking into the use of outcome 16 GMP have undertaken a deep-dive review into 120 domestic abuse crimes (closed as Outcome 16) including a review of the officer's body-worn video (BWV) footage. This review has identified further areas for improvement and bespoke reports have been provided to individual districts. Additionally, this learning is being used to inform Continuous Professional Development training and a framework of reflective practice has begun to be utilised and implemented for officers where training needs are identified.

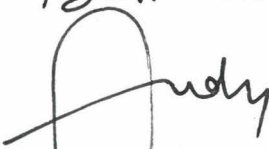
GMP launched a Prisoner Processing Pilot in the City of Manchester in March 2021. This has focused on violence against the person offences (including domestic abuse) and the unit provides a dedicated team of officers who own the entire investigation and victim's journey. The initial feedback from this has been positive, and the next unit will be embedded in Bury and Rochdale, with plans to embed a unit in each of the six remaining command areas shortly.

There is also work underway in GMP to review PIP 2 investigations and to introduce criminal justice units. The review of PIP 2 investigations is designed to establish a standardised process of recording PIP 2 investigation updates, records of victim contact, and supervisory reviews onto GMP's Integrated Operational Policing System (iOPS). This is forming part of the work to address the HMICFRS Victim Services Assessment finding that 50% of investigations weren't supervised properly and were therefore less effective. Criminal Justice Units were introduced in December 2020 and four have been created across GMP. These units aim to improve investigative outcomes for victims of crime (including domestic abuse), by making sure that the files of evidence submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) are of the highest quality and contain all necessary information and materials to expedite a case through court. Since these new units have been introduced, the number of escalations that GMP has received from the CPS has fallen, the number of files passing pre-charge triage to the CPS has improved, and overall file quality measured by the National File Quality Standards has improved from 50% failure rate to 14% failure rate in January 2021 which is a significant improvement.

In relation to encouraging the use of evidence led prosecutions in cases of domestic abuse GMP have undertaken a number of actions. The Domestic Abuse Policy has been revised and this now includes clear definitions and responsibilities for officers who are investigating domestic abuse to consider evidence led prosecutions where it is appropriate to do so. In addition to this work has taken place to highlight examples of successful evidence-led prosecutions in cases of domestic

abuse and a guidance document on evidence-led prosecutions has been created, including what the CPS look for when making a charging decision. GMP will also be reviewing the Awareness of the 'Domestic Abuse Evidence-Led Prosecutions' training given to lawyers joining CPS Direct with the view to using this to deliver something similar across GMP. Finally, a Detective Chief Inspector has been seconded to the People and Development Branch to review all vulnerability training which is provided to GMP officers.

I am fully committed to further improving Greater Manchester Police's response to domestic abuse victims and we have begun to make steps in the right direction to achieving this. However I do recognise that there still much work to do and this will be a continued focus for me over the next few years.

Best wishes,


Andy Burnham
Mayor of Greater Manchester