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Home Secretary
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Cc: HMICFRS

Our Ref: JC/jpi

6 January 2020

West Mercia Police: Crime Data Integrity Inspection 2019

I am writing to you in response to the HMICFRS Crime Data Integrity (CDI) inspection report published in October 2019.

The inspection provided an overall judgement of 'Good' for CDI compliance, finding that over 90% of reported crimes were found to have been recorded accurately, including over 95% of sexual offences. In addition, West Mercia Police was graded 'Good' at its effectiveness for recording crime, for the efficiency and systems it has in place and for its leadership and culture around CDI.

It is pleasing that the report recognises the good progress the force has made in improving its crime recording since the last inspection in 2014 and that the leadership team in West Mercia Police is clearly committed to good crime recording. This has made sure that more victims receive the service they are entitled to and can access support and safeguarding where needed.

There is however room for improvement, particularly around the recording of certain crime types such as violent crime and the timeliness of crime recording. The report highlights four specific areas for improvement, namely:

- improve how it records violent crimes, particularly harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and domestic abuse-related crimes;
- arrange to provide training in the Home Office Counting Rules for all officers and staff in crime recording roles;
- improve how it identifies and records modern slavery crimes from reports received through the national referral mechanism; and
- improve how it collects and analyses equality data through its crime reporting and recording systems.

The force had an existing CDI action plan which has been revised to include the areas for improvement identified by HMICFRS. Progress against this action plan is reviewed and monitored by a CDI Core Group. Actions implemented to address the report findings include the following.

The main issues impacting on the recording of harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour have been identified and are being addressed through a wider programme seeking to improve officers understanding and approach to domestic abuse. This includes issuing officers with a toolkit on stalking and harassment, supported through shift briefings in local policing areas.

All student officers now get two focused inputs on crime recording and there is an input on the sergeants' passport training and OCC training days. It is recognised there is a need to formalise and extend training to key areas such as new starters in the OCC.

A new process is being put in place to better identify offences of modern slavery, and referrals now go to the Public Service Desks who will ensure offences are recorded straight away and allocated. This approach will provide greater resilience.

It is recognised that the recording of protected characteristics is not a mandatory field on the Athena management system and as a result they are not always recorded. The Head of Public Contact is reviewing how this can be improved.

To ensure the continued force focus on CDI the Force Crime Registrar has an agreed rolling audit programme, which has been revised to include stalking and harassment. The findings from the audit programme are used to identify areas for improvement and organisation learning.

Overall I am satisfied that the force has accepted the findings of the report and is working to address the areas for improvement identified. As Commissioner I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account, to ensure all victims get the efficient and effective service they deserve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Champion". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

John Champion
Police & Crime Commissioner
West Mercia

