



Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Cc: HMICFRS

Our Ref: JC/jpi

20th September 2021

Dear Home Secretary

Policing in the pandemic The police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020

I am writing to you in response to the above HMICFRS inspection reports published together earlier this year.

I welcome this report and the recognition it gives to the difficult role policing had to play during the pandemic. The report contains 5 specific recommendations for all police forces together with a number of learning points.

The first recommendation was that forces must immediately make sure that officers understand and correctly implement the guidance for managing registered sex offenders during the pandemic. West Mercia Police has maintained a robust approach to the management of sex offenders throughout the pandemic, adapting working practices to ensure that the appropriate checks and notifications continued. At the height of the pandemic this included calling vulnerable offenders from outside their homes and asking them to present at a window or door to officers waiting outside in an unmarked car.

The force has implemented a structured and organised response to policing in the pandemic, including a bespoke intranet site and structured communications via the command structures put in place. This enables the force to quickly respond to changes in legislation and to disseminate changes in legislation and guidance in an effective and efficient manner, in line with the second recommendation.

The force has adopted national guidance and put in place a policy to ensure staff followed the correct process if they come into contact with someone displaying coronavirus symptoms. It was the responsibility of the Covid Silver command cell that included Human Resources and Occupational Health to ensure the correct guidance is followed. All guidance is on the intranet site and is regularly reviewed in light of changes.

The fourth recommendation is that forces 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. Throughout the pandemic the force adapted to minor PACE and policy changes and consistently recorded the information required

The final recommendation to assess the sustainability of temporary measures introduced that changed the ways of working and considering whether any should continue has been progressed. A governance group has been established to oversee progress of the key areas identified.

Overall I am satisfied with the force response to recommendations set out in the report.

The last year has been one of the most challenging in recent history, and it brought with it exceptional challenges for policing, with the force needing to change and adapt to meet the changing demands of the national health emergency. West Mercia Police officers and staff have risen to the challenge, and have continued to support and protect the public they serve

Best Wishes



John Campion
Police & Crime Commissioner
West Mercia