



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

Getting the balance right? An inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests

I am writing to you in response to the above HMICFRS inspection report published earlier this year and apologise for the delay in my response.

I welcome this report, which calls for a 'modest reset of the scales' in order to secure a better balance between the rights of protestors, and the rights of residents and businesses. From a policing perspective, it is important that the legislation surrounding protests is clear and that police understand their responsibilities around protests so that protests can be managed fairly and effectively.

Of the 13 recommendations and 4 areas for improvement (AFIs) identified in the report, 2 of the recommendations and 3 AFIs are specifically for chief constables to address. The first of these recommendations is that legal services teams subscribe to the College of Policing Knowledge Hub's Association of Police Lawyers group. Funding was found to cover the minimal costs and all the solicitors are now subscribed.

The second recommendation is to ensure robust governance arrangements are in place to secure consistent, effective debrief processes for protest policing. In response, West Mercia Police's Ops Planning have amended their processes to take more ownership in the end to end process of planning for events, including protests. This enables greater oversight in the decision making involved from the point of intelligence being received to the conclusion of an event, including the debrief period. The use of a national post event learning review form and a review of the new arrangements will be tested after a protest.


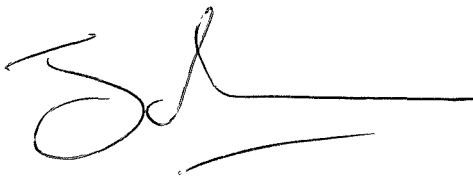
Turning to the AFIs, the report identifies the use of protest related community impact assessments as an area for improvement, and this is the case in West Mercia.

Steps have now been put in place to improve the processes including the rationale for completion. Monitoring will be put in place to ensure changes are embedded and that CIAs are supporting the planning and/or debriefing of operations.

Changes have been made to the end to end process of planning, running and debriefing of all events, including protests. This enables greater oversight and recording of decisions, including resource levels.

West Mercia Police submit a weekly intelligence report into the National Police Coordination Centre's Strategic Intelligence and Briefing team, and are liaising with them to ensure the standard of submission is sufficient. The force are also part of a regional meeting where protest intelligence is discussed.

Overall I am satisfied with the response taken by the force to address the issues raised in the report and I will continue to hold the chief constable to account to ensure all the changes are fully implemented.

John Campion
Police & Crime Commissioner
West Mercia