



Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

19th December 2022

*Dear Home Secretary*

**A report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in West Mercia Police**

I am writing to you in response to the above HMICFRS report published on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022.

The report followed an inspection of West Mercia Police in September 2021 and focuses on the effectiveness of the force's vetting, IT monitoring and counter corruption activity. As the inspection took place over 12 months ago, no grading was provided, however 4 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) were identified.

It should be noted that there is significant overlap between the AFIs identified during the local inspection in 2021, and the more recent national HMICFRS report on vetting, misconduct and misogyny that was published on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022. A formal response to the national report has been sent separately. I welcome the focus on vetting and counter-corruption arrangements provided across both reports and I am pleased that West Mercia Police is in a good position to respond to the AFIs and recommendations made by the inspectorate.

The force has long established processes in place to ensure appropriate governance of the local and national HMICFRS AFIs and recommendations, with clear Chief Officers and PCC oversight. Following the publication of the 2 vetting and counter-corruption reports, the force developed an action tracker to record and monitor the activity underway to address the reports' findings. Below I set out a number of examples of activities in train to address the AFIs raised in the local inspection report.

Due to low numbers there are no clear trends in relation to disproportionality in the vetting process in West Mercia. However, the vetting team have been working closely

with colleagues in recruitment to better understand the experiences and issues raised by applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds as part of the national Uplift. The force will continue to develop its approach to understanding disproportionality going forward.

Messaging is ongoing internally and externally to raise awareness of counter corruption threats and reporting requirements in respect of vetting and conduct. In support of this, the force is building relationships with local partners and service providers, including those I commission, to ensure that the organisations who support vulnerable people are able to spot warning signs and understand routes to report any concerns. To date, the force has hosted 2 webinars for partner organisations including local authority safeguarding units, independent sexual violence advisors (ISVA), independent domestic violence advisors (IDVA) and other victim support services. This will be supplemented by further communication inputs that are under development.

The AFIs raised in the local inspection report have been used to inform the budget setting process for 2023/24 and a budget has been agreed to procure an ICT monitoring system in the New Year. This has been a long standing AFI, and I am pleased that action is being taken to ensure that West Mercia Police is equipped with the right technology to enhance its investigative and proactive intelligence gathering capabilities.

My Safer West Mercia Plan includes specific commitments to ensure the code of ethics is embedded within West Mercia Police. To that end, I meet with the Deputy Chief Constable and the Head of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) on a quarterly basis to review the force's performance in respect of standards and ethics, including vetting and conduct. Any concerns I have are escalated through my formal holding to account (HTA) meetings with the Chief Constable. Recent examples include a focus on conduct at the February 2022 Performance HTA meeting, and a review of conduct, fairness and standards at the May 2022 Workforce HTA meeting.

I will continue, as Commissioner, to use the findings from the national HMICFRS report to hold the force to account around its approach to tackling vetting, misconduct and misogyny in the service.

Bob Atkinson



John Campion  
Police and Crime Commissioner  
**West Mercia**

cc West Mercia Police Chief Constable  
HMICFRS