



**Sent via email**

Martin Surl  
Police and Crime Commissioner for  
Gloucestershire

Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Email: Julian.moss@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk  
Direct Dial: 01452 752310  
Date: 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017

Dear Martin,

**Comments on the HMIC Child Protection Inspection – s.55 Police and Crime Act 1996 request**

Thank you for giving Gloucestershire Constabulary the opportunity to comment on the HMIC child protection inspection of Gloucestershire Constabulary earlier in the year. Chief Constable Hansen has asked me to respond on his behalf. The protection of children is something that the Chief Constable and the Chief Officer Team cares passionately about and we are committed to improving the service we provide. This letter outlines our approach and response to the inspection.

As you are aware, HMIC asked us to submit an action plan to them within six weeks, outlining our response to the inspection and how we intend to improve. The action plan is now ready for submission to HMIC and contains significant detail about how we intend to improve our services to protect children in our communities. I have attached the plan to this letter and I would encourage you to review our response critically. Within six months we will be subject to a further inspection and by that time I expect our assessment to have improved significantly.

Whilst some aspects of the inspection report were concerning, the report clearly stated that our initial response to high risk investigations was generally good and that children were at the centre of decision making when officers attended incidents. This is reflective of the ethos across the organisation that we are here to keep people safe. The report also highlighted how dedicated our officers and staff were to protecting children but we know we must do more. It is essential that the protection of children is seen as the business of everyone in the Constabulary and I want to ensure that.

You will already be aware that child protection is increasingly a growing challenge for the service and between November 2014/15 and November 2015/16 the following large increases in demand were experienced by the Constabulary:

- Domestic abuse referrals involving children increased by 9.8%
- Children protection referrals increased by 47%
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) referrals increased by 48%



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Notwithstanding the significant increase in demand, I am confident that we are making significant progress. As indicated, the action plan contains our detailed response and mainly focusses on the following areas:

- How we train officers and staff about child protection and the associated wider issues
- How we monitor investigations and our performance
- How we respond to missing children, especially those with CSE warnings
- How we respond to children in domestic abuse situations
- How we deal with children we bring into custody

I would like to assure you that a robust governance structure is in place to drive improvements and the plan is scrutinised through our Public Protection Service Delivery Board (PPSDB) under my leadership. The Board has wide representation from across the organisation and we have promoted a “one team” approach to service improvement. The Board has external support and scrutiny from the OPCC, the Diocese of Gloucester and Children’s Services. All fifteen actions have comprehensive responses which represents good progress at this stage. However, we need to ensure that we translate the priorities in the action plan into delivery in order to protect children effectively.

In addition, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) has its own improvement board, chaired by the Department of Education. Our head of Public Protection, Detective Superintendent Simon Atkinson represents the police on that board. Cross-agency development is being coordinated by the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children’s Board (GSCB). Myself and Detective Superintendent Simon Atkinson recently met with the Chair and the new Director of Children’s services to align our thinking and response. I must stress that effective partnership working and information sharing are key to improving services to protect children and we are absolutely committed to work in a supportive and challenging way with all of our statutory and voluntary agencies.

In conclusion, we accept the findings of the HMIC inspection report. It has served to enable us to take stock of our approach and to reflect. I am absolutely committed to making improvements to our child protection services and am confident that significant improvements will be made when HMIC come back into force.

Yours sincerely

Julian Moss  
Assistant Chief Constable - Operations

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