



RESPONSE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER OF WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON TO THE HMICFRS STATE OF POLICING: THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF POLICING IN ENGLAND AND WALES 2019 (July 2020)

Police and Crime Commissioner's comments

I welcome the "State of Policing" report which contains assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of policing in England and Wales based on the inspections that were completed between May 2019 and March 2020. This is a good report on the state of policing nationally and I am pleased that Wiltshire Police has maintained its "Good" rating, an expectation that I have again set in the extended Police and Crime Plan, that I published last month and will now run until 2022.

Whilst the police's role in the COVID19 pandemic may dominate the report, it draws attention to some fundamental issues that need to be addressed within policing. These include the distribution of national funding, which I have raised many times over the past eight years, and the difficulty of collaboration between forces, although the analysis of the reasons for those failures does warrant greater work.

The report states that 'levels of service don't always meet public expectations' and therefore this misalignment may negatively impact on wider public confidence and satisfaction in policing. Considering this already difficult position, I would welcome if the report further accentuated the importance of fairness and confidence in policing and Criminal Justice System, particularly on the issue of disproportionality. I recognise that there is a risk of alienating some sections of society and therefore I am proudly leading on this piece of work with the Police and other CJS partners. In this regard, I would welcome further HMICFRS support to drive improvement in vital areas for our communities.

The report also recognises the role the police plays in issues such as mental health, something that Wiltshire Police has been working hard with partners to address. Mental health related issues now account for about 20% of police time. Our officers respond to those with mental health problems with care and compassion. Wiltshire Police has been recognised as 'good' for the way it supports those with mental health problems. As a result of the continued progress police custody has not been

used as a place of safety for someone in crisis for more than two years and it should stay that way.

The Mental Health Triage team, which is commissioned by my office, continues to provide vital support to officers who are responding to incidents relating to mental health, and ensures those involved are given the best support. Wiltshire Police is one of the few forces in the country to have its own dedicated 24/7 Mental Health Nurse to support staff and officers.

I am pleased to see comment on the roles of the Home Office and National Policing Board, both of which have a role in setting the framework for a modern national police service - locally delivered and locally accountable. I fully understand that there is a need to ensure a balance between the national and the local policing. On a day on which we have heard of the excellent work done by forces across the country, including that coordinated by the South West Regional Crime Unit working with the National Crime agency, the need for better linkage between forces and the benefits derived, is starkly demonstrated.

Policing must remain locally accountable regardless of its national or regional structure and any further progress requires the centre to bring forward the right legislation which will underpin the collaborative arrangements between individual Police and Crime Commissioner and their forces retrospectively. Maintaining local accountability is central to Peelian principles and vital for the continued trust and appropriate scrutiny of policing services. Regardless of national, sub-national and local configurations there must be a clear and publically accountable system for holding policing services to account, as well as articulating the legitimate demands of our communities.

Chief Constable's comments

We know that policing is facing challenging times ahead. This report highlights the issues around policing in 2019, but we obviously know that the world has changed dramatically since then and that the long-term impact of COVID-19 will be felt for potentially years to come.

As we enter what is likely to be a period of austerity, we need to focus our attention on protecting the most vulnerable in our society. This will include carrying out proactive work tackling organised crime groups and County Lines drug dealers, but also increasing awareness around crimes such as domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation.

We are working hard to ensure we continue to build on and invest in our community policing model, as this provides the bedrock of policing across our communities, while at the same time providing specialist and experienced teams to target specific types of criminality.

I have confidence that no matter what challenge lies ahead, my officers and staff

remain committed to providing the very best service to the communities of Swindon and Wiltshire.

Cc: Wendy Williams, HMI
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