

Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham

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**Priti Patel MP**

**Home Secretary**

**Home Office**

**2 Marsham Street**

**London**

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**Police and Crime Commissioner: Joy Allen**

**Monitoring Officer: Stephen White**

 **4th January 2022**

 Dear Home Secretary,

**HMICFRS Inspection Report: Policing in the pandemic - The police response to the coronavirus pandemic during 2020.**

This letter constitutes the response to the above inspection from myself, Joy Allen, Durham Police and Crime Commissioner, in order to fulfil my responsibilities with regard to Section 55 of the Police Act 1996. The reply to HMICFRS will also be published on my website.

In turn, here are position statements showing what the Constabulary is doing to meet the recommendations and areas for improvement which relates to Chief Constables, of which I am in support:

**Recommendation 1: Forces must immediately make sure that officers understand and correctly implement the guidance for managing registered sex offenders during the pandemic.**

During the first lockdown Durham Constabulary developed an exceptional delivery model for the management of Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs). As front counters closed issues around sex offender registration moved to telephone registrations completed by administrative teams. The home visits were risk assessed and staff were supplied with full Personal Protective Equipment, whilst very high and high risk sex offenders were still visited in person and where concerns were founded staff entered the property to investigate. For those RSOs who were of lower concern Active Risk Management System (ARMS) assessments were completed via phone outside of the address in full sight of the RSO inside the property. Contingencies were put in place around the lowest risk RSOs and those who were deemed as clinically vulnerable and shielding. Concerning the latter, should an officer deem the RSO at risk or a child at risk then they were prepared to enter and investigate to negate the risk. For those offenders of low risk, where ARMS were delayed on the Violent Sex Offender Register (ViSOR), a full ARMS assessment after lockdown was planned and a temporary ARMS assessment was completed over the phone. Durham Constabulary completed more visits on behalf of probation than was typical, but only in exceptional circumstances. Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement meetings continued online. Although officers had no access to ViSOR remotely, the Force established additional access at stations away from the Management of Sexual or Violent Offenders base which facilitated safe working and social distancing. It is of note a schedule of home working, field working, and office-based working has continued post pandemic as it yielded an increase in efficiency. Coming through the phases of lockdown Durham are now back working in full line with the College of policing Authorised Professional Practice.

**Recommendation 2: Forces must immediately make sure they can manage their responses to changes in coronavirus-related legislation. They must ensure frontline officers and staff are clear about the difference between legislation and guidance.**

From the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic Durham Constabulary have had a working process in relation to changes in legislation. This has been a combined approach through the Covid Command Room, media, and printing services. Each change in legislation has resulted in corresponding and appropriate changes to Fixed Penalty Notices. These have been documented and a history kept.

**Recommendation 3: Forces must immediately put in place a policy to make sure that they follow the guidance and self-isolation directions when members of the workforce come into contact with someone with coronavirus symptoms.**

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic there has been an excellent working relationship between Durham Constabulary and Public Health England’s the various designated single points of contacts. This relationship has undoubtedly assisted in the management of absences. Although, not subject of a formal policy, an internal standard operation procedure was initiated and implemented. There was high compliance throughout the pandemic which assisted in mitigating the impact of positive cases through effective management of self-isolation.

**Recommendation 4: Forces must immediately make sure that they 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. The record must make clear how any consents are obtained about the way in which legal advice and representation are provided.**

When a detainee is given their rights (verbally) they will be informed that there is an option for the advice to be given via telephone due to the pandemic but that they have the right to request a solicitor attend in person. If the detainee is satisfied with remote advice/consultation a note of this is made on the custody record and best practice is that the detainee signs the record to confirm.

**Recommendation 5: Within six months, forces must assess the sustainability of any temporary measures introduced during the pandemic that change the way they work. They must understand positive, negative, and unintended consequences of the scale and impact of the changes before determining if any of these new ways of working should continue.**

The impact of changes required and initiated as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic were captured through Durham Constabulary’s review of their internal work stream in this space. Some of the changes have now been adopted as business as usual. Changes have been tracked at the strategic level with adherence through Durham Constabulary’s People Board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable. The Board has strategic oversight of staffing and organisational attitudes and behaviours and seeks to identify and address immediate and emerging threats and risks in these areas.

I am also copying this letter to Sir Thomas Winsor, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

Yours sincerely,



**Joy Allen**

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Darlington and Durham**

*The Police and Crime Commissioner for Durham is an accredited Living Wage Employer with the Living Wage Foundation*

