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Office of the
**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
West Yorkshire

My Reference: OPCC/MBW/NF

Your Reference:

2nd September 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

Re. HMICFRS Spotlight Report: Police contact management through call handling and control rooms in 2018/19

Can I thank HMICFRS for their recent national report on police services' management of contact through their call centres and control rooms.

The management of the public's contact with West Yorkshire Police (WYP) is naturally one of the fundamental components of our police services' operations. It is an area which has received a great deal of attention in recent years as we have developed processes which can help meet the rising levels of demand placed on the police during an era where resources have been severely stretched through Government austerity.

The establishment of a Force Crime Management Unit (FCMU), online reporting progress, 101 Live Chat services, and a thorough programme to ensure the highest standards of accuracy in the recording of crimes, have all played an important role in helping WYP to achieve an 'Outstanding' rating for the force's efficiency in this year's PEEL inspection assessment.

Demand from the public for an emergency response remains at an all-time high. West Yorkshire Police received 478,000 - 999 calls during 2019/20; this is over 1,300 - 999 calls each day. WYP continue to answer all of these calls with an average waiting time for a 999 caller of just 5 seconds.

Responding to specific findings in the report, I would like to draw your attention to the following areas of activity at WYP which reflect our commitment to maintaining high standards in our initial response to the public:

Work to improve quality and consistency in the assessment of the vulnerability of callers.

This year's PEEL inspection summarises WYP's performance in the important task of accurately identifying a caller's needs at the contact centre.

"We witnessed call handlers promptly identify victims' vulnerability at the first point of contact using THRIVE and the NDM (National Decision Making model). They gave appropriate advice on keeping victims safe and preserving evidence for potential forensic opportunities."

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Building on this work, WYP have issued further guidance to call-handlers to improve the response to domestic abuse incidents. A checklist of questions are asked by the call-taker to identify hidden risks, in particular to help identify cases of stalking and harassment. The force is also developing training to assist in identifying cases of modern slavery and people trafficking.

'THRIVE Champions' within the contact centre team - combined with regular dip samples of call management by WYP's People Development Unit - help to ensure a consistent, high quality response.

Improvements in welfare support for contact centre staff.

As the HMICFRS report highlights, the demands placed on police services' call-handlers are considerable. Respect for colleagues' welfare has to be at the forefront of supervisors' thoughts, and at WYP, a framework of services are in place when call-takers need extra support. This includes allocated wellbeing rooms at contact centre sites; peer support through TRiM (the trauma risk management programme); and training from the mental health charity *Mind*. Environmental Scanning is also helping to prepare staff for challenging periods of demand.

Use of technology to help to quickly identify callers.

A major programme of work for our contact function is the investment in new technology to help deliver high standards in customer relationship management (CRM). The procurement process also involves acquiring new telephony and a new command and control system. The CRM system will help us to better identify individual callers and resolve incident demand, and will either utilise a Vulnerable Persons Index, or will cross-reference callers to help identify repeat victims. The system is expected to be in place by Autumn next year.

Further work to improve the way we handle demand placed on the contact centre:

- Enhancing the existing online reporting tool with plans to add Claire/Sarah's Law options,
- Exploring the use of the GoodSAM app - a video streaming tool designed for the emergency services which allows members of the public to share their location (as well as what they are seeing at the scene of an incident), via the camera on their mobile phone,
- Use of social media to help manage demand on the contact centre, especially at peak times,
- Improved 'signposting' for callers where more appropriate sources of help are available (e.g. local authorities), and improved information sharing with the Yorkshire Ambulance Service,
- Realising the benefits of 'silent deployment', which reduces call handling time and frees call handlers and despatchers to ensure 999 callers are receiving the right level of service and the appropriate response,
- Introducing a domestic abuse online reporting tool so that individuals who feel that they cannot use 999 or 101 have an additional means of reporting incidents.

This report contained eight recommendations for improvement to police services' contact management. Being a national-level report, not all of these findings are relevant to West Yorkshire Police, however, I will review WYP's progress in implementing new practices and technology in the months ahead through my usual accountability and bilateral arrangements with the Chief Constable.

Yours sincerely



Mark Burns-Williamson
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire