



To: The Home Secretary
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
and Fire and Rescue Services

21 November 2019

Dear Home Secretary and HMICFRS,

Response from Dr Alan Billings, Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire, to the HMICFRS and HMIP Joint Inspection of Custody Suites

I welcome the joint inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and Her Majesty's Inspection of Prisons (HMIP) following an unannounced inspection visit to police custody suites in South Yorkshire, published on 1 October 2019.

The report includes both positive findings and areas of concern.

I note the good work undertaken by South Yorkshire Police around booking people in speedily and appropriately and the extensive work South Yorkshire Police has undertaken to ensure the safe treatment of detainees. However, it is clearly unacceptable that South Yorkshire Police had not consistently complied with legislation and guidance. This included meeting the requirements of the Police and Crime Evidence Act (PACE) or section 31 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, which requires that all detained girls should be in the care of a woman and reviews of detention not taking place in all cases.

South Yorkshire Police has already put in place a number of measures to address these. For example, timeliness data is now circulated daily to custody and non-custody staff involved in detainee reviews. This and other performance data is now scrutinised at new Custody Daily Management Meetings.

I know that every area of policing has been under pressure in recent years and custody is no exception. Over the last three years, significant investment has been made in Neighbourhood Policing Teams which has allowed South Yorkshire Police to be far more proactive in targeting criminals and those who cause harm to local communities. This has resulted in a 27% increase in the number of people arrested, an additional 400 people passing through custody each month.

South Yorkshire Police has already recognised the increased pressure this has placed on the custody estate and has commissioned a full Custody Review. The outcomes of this review, along with the observations of HMICFRS and HMIP and internal scrutiny will

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inform the future design and governance arrangements of South Yorkshire Police's custody estate and management of it.

South Yorkshire Police is clearly focused on diverting children and vulnerable people, especially those with mental ill-health, away from custody. I am concerned that in the small number of cases where children were refused bail, alternative overnight local authority accommodation was rarely found as a result of which I will be monitoring this closely.

My Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) have been briefed on the findings of the inspection and additional guidance on specific areas of focus has been provided. This includes paying particular attention to the provision of overnight local authority accommodation being found.

Since I became PCC I have sought to provide better custody facilities. South Yorkshire now has a new custody suite at Barnsley and a new custody and crime centre at Shepcote Lane in Sheffield. Detailed plans are in place for a new custody suite in Doncaster. This is reflected in the comments in the report around the physical conditions of the suites which highlight conditions are good in Barnsley and Shepcote, but the Doncaster suite is old and in a state of disrepair. The cleanliness and maintenance of the suites is also a focus of my ICVs.

I will continue to work with the Chief Constable to ensure that the causes of concern and recommendations are actioned.

All good wishes



Dr Alan Billings
South Yorkshire Police & Crime Commissioner