

Katy Bourne
Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

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The Office of the
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**Sussex
Police & Crime
Commissioner**

Ms Zoe Billingham
HM Inspector of Constabulary
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service
6th Floor – Globe House
89 Eccleston Square
London
SW1V 1PN

7 January 2019

Dear Zoe,

HMICFRS – Child Protection Inspection

I write in respect of the recently published findings for Sussex Police in the child protection inspection. I welcome the opportunity to comment on the HMICFRS report and have carefully studied its findings and recommendations.

I understand that this was the first time HMICFRS has inspected Sussex Police's child protection provision and I was very pleased to note that there was "strong evidence that senior officers are working to improve the way the Force manages the risks to children and meets the ongoing increase in demand for child protection".

I particularly welcomed HMICFRS' commendation that "the officers and staff who manage child abuse investigations within Sussex Police are committed and dedicated, often working in difficult and demanding circumstances".

I questioned the Deputy Chief Constable regarding the content of the report during our monthly Performance & Accountability Meeting (PAM) on 14 December 2018. This session is archived and can be viewed on my website using the following link:
www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/webcasting/

HMICFRS' concerns about the workloads, resourcing and inconsistencies within the Safeguarding Investigation Units (SIUs) were acknowledged and understood. The Deputy Chief Constable confirmed that there has been a significant increase in the demand for officers in the SIUs, including a 27% increase in the number of complex cases being investigated by the SIUs, compared to last year, which equates to an additional 800 cases per month.

I have supported new investment in the SIUs to respond to vulnerable and at risk children through increases in the police precept in 2016/17 and 2017/18. This approach has increased the available resources in the two areas, Brighton & Hove and Crawley, specifically highlighted in the report, following a business case set out by the Chief Constable for additional investment. It is recognised that this is an area of policing that Sussex Police will continue to invest in moving forward because of the anticipated increase in demand, including further reports of historical offences. I will continue to do all I can to raise additional funding through the precept in 2019/20 to modernise and strengthen local policing in Sussex.

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I am reassured that the Force reacts proportionately to all referrals made to Sussex Police and I understand that the police are not always the primary agency to respond. It is important to recognise that a partnership-based approach is required to ensure that the best possible outcomes are realised for children, balancing the needs for safeguarding and protection with criminal investigations. As a result of this approach, some of the referrals need to be assessed by Sussex Police very quickly and proportionately with the other partners, including reasoned judgments that these agencies are sometimes better placed to provide a more effective response to the child than the Force is, taking all of the circumstances into account.

I am pleased to confirm that Sussex Police is progressing well with each of the 8 recommendations made by HMICFRS and I am thankful for the energy, commitment and activity that has been put into improving this important area for the Force. In particular, the two recommendations that were to be undertaken immediately, together with the four recommendations within three months, have each been completed by Sussex Police. The two outstanding recommendations from the report are currently being progressed and will be completed once technological improvements have been made to Force systems and processes.

I have commended the police officers and staff for their hard work and ongoing commitment to protecting vulnerable people, including children. As PCC, I will continue to closely monitor the progress of Sussex Police in this area.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katy Bourne', written in a cursive style.

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