



Sir Thomas Winsor ws

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

Sir Michael Wilshaw
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Children's Services and Skills
Piccadilly Gate
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18 October 2016

Dear Sir Michael

POLICE EFFECTIVENESS IN CHILD PROTECTION

Thank you for your letter of 17 October 2016.

2. As you know, HMIC has a programme of annual, all-force inspections (called PEEL: police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy), covering every force in England and Wales. As part of that programme, we assess how effectively police forces protect the vulnerable from harm and support victims. In our 2015 vulnerability report, we rated 27 forces as requiring improvement and four as inadequate; vulnerability of course includes child protection.

3. As part of this year's PEEL inspections, we are assessing how effectively police forces investigate offences involving vulnerable victims and work with other public bodies and voluntary sector agencies in keeping children safe.

4. In addition to the PEEL inspection programme, we also have a rolling programme of child protection inspections. Each inspection takes place over a two-week period, is staffed with child protection specialists, and includes a detailed examination of case files (approximately 70 per force). In the Metropolitan Police, the inspection is of course much larger because of the size of the force.

5. These inspections provide a very thorough assessment of how well a force handles child protection matters, including, but not limited to: how well officers understand and respond to vulnerability and risk; how well forces deal with missing and absent children; online abuse and online child sexual exploitation; children in custody; and the management of registered sex offenders. The inspections cover entire police areas and they are therefore not confined to any single local authority.

6. You will of course also be aware of the extensive body of reports which HMIC has recently published in this area, including:

- (a) *'Online and On the Edge: Real Risks in a Virtual World'* (July 2015), which deals with online child sexual exploitation;

- (b) *'In Harm's Way: The Role of the Police in Keeping Children Safe'* (July 2015), which summarises HMIC's findings in 21 child protection inspections;

- (c) *'Building the Picture: An Inspection of Police Information Management'* (July 2015), concerning the ways in which the police collect, record, process, evaluate and disseminate information concerning child abuse;

- (d) *'Missing Children: Who Cares?'* (March 2016), which concerns with the efficiency and effectiveness of the police in handling missing and absent children;

- (e) *'The Depths of Dishonour: Hidden Voices and Shameful Crimes'* (December 2015), concerning crimes – including crimes against children – motivated by asserted cultural pressures;

- (f) our 12 recent inspections of child protection in individual forces; and

- (g) our nine follow-up inspections of child protection in failing forces.

7. In addition, we are of course full partners with OFSTED, the Care Quality Commission and HM Inspectorate of Probation in the joint targeted area inspections in this respect; these cover the work of local safeguarding children boards as well as other local arrangements.

8. As you therefore appreciate, we have completed and continue to be engaged in a very substantial body of work in connection with how the police and other agencies deal with child abuse. You will of course recognise that many of the problems to which you refer are also concerns of local authorities and other statutory agencies.

9. We will persist in ensuring that the police understand their very high public duty most efficiently and effectively to use their powers, and discharge their responsibilities, in connection with the protection of children. I take this opportunity of repeating my great appreciation to OFSTED for its most valuable assistance and close contribution in that work, and for the child protection work which OFSTED leads with HMIC support.

Yours sincerely,

SIR THOMAS WINSOR
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary