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HM Inspector of Constabulary, Eastern Region

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Ms Colette Paul QPM
Chief Constable – Bedfordshire Police

Dear Colette

Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time

Between January and April 2014, HMIC carried out inspection fieldwork across all 43 forces in England and Wales. This inspection, called 'Making best use of police time' (now known as 'Core business: An inspection of crime prevention, police attendance and use of police time') assessed three areas of police work. These were:

- how well forces are preventing crime and anti-social behaviour;
- how forces respond to reports of crime, including investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice; and
- how well forces are freeing up the time of their staff so they can focus on core policing functions.

Attached is an embargoed copy of the national thematic report for this inspection which will now be published by HMIC on Thursday 4 September 2014 at 00:01. This must not be published until this date and time.

The findings that specifically relate to your force are included in this letter. The initial findings were previously sent to you for factual accuracy checks and, where appropriate, have been amended following your response.

The majority of the inspection findings contained in the national thematic report do not identify individual forces. However electronic versions of the national report will link to the HMIC website where data on each force can be viewed.

We will revisit some of the evidence gathered during the 'Core business' inspection as part of the crime inspection for HMIC's Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) interim assessment.

All forces will be given the opportunity to provide an update. This updated evidence will be considered as part of the PEEL interim crime inspection, which is due to be published at the end of November.

Findings that specifically relate to your force are:

Preventing Crime

- The force does not have an overarching crime prevention strategy but it does have a crime reduction strategy. However, crime reduction as a function

appears to be separate from other parts of the organisation rather than an embedded activity across all areas of policing.

- At the time of the inspection there had been an erosion of neighbourhood policing resources. Response officers commented that they do not do any preventative policing due to demand. Although some preventative work was being undertaken in neighbourhoods, some activities were inhibited by the lack of officers with warranted powers. However, HMIC found some good examples where the force has undertaken long-term crime prevention initiatives. We also found that the daily management meetings were being well used to focus staff towards crime prevention activity.
- Although the force has a database that helps officers and staff to solve problems that support neighbourhood prevention activity, it is not being used as effectively as it could be.
- Other than during initial training, no formal crime prevention training has been delivered to staff who frequently deal with victims of crime and anti-social behaviour. The force has an opportunity to introduce prevention training through its StreetWise Max programme.
- The force maintains that its new annual and five year delivery plans will form the basis of the cultural and structural change needed to support the force purpose of 'fighting crime and protecting the public'. HMIC will monitor these developments.

Attending crimes and incidents

- The force does not have a policy to attend all reports of crimes and incidents, but one based on a series of considerations including identifying the threat, risk and harm to the victim, caller or community. Some staff do not fully understand how to assess the level of threat, harm and risk. HMIC understands that the force has not consulted with the public in relation to this policy.
- There were insufficient resources in the force's response function which was overwhelmed at the time of the inspection. It was unable to meet calls for assistance (including calls graded as 'immediate') in a timely manner and this was potentially placing the public at significant risk.
- The force control room operators were found to be inhibited from being able to determine the appropriately graded response to calls for assistance, in part because of the implementation of a mandatory 'immediate' attendance policy in respect of all calls relating to domestic abuse.
- The force is not consistently identifying vulnerable and repeat victims. It needs to ensure that the necessary checks are in place so that all potential vulnerability factors, such as disability or race, are identified.
- Crime is recorded by the force in one of two ways, creating an incident on the command and control system and then subsequently entering details onto the crime recording system, or directly recording crime onto the crime-recording system, without creating an incident first. The force is unable to identify the number of crimes recorded directly onto the crime recording system, or how many of those crimes it attends subsequently.
- During the inspection, HMIC reviewed a number of crime investigations, including reports of crimes that were not attended. In certain cases, for crimes such as burglary dwellings, there was clear evidence of investigation and supervision. However, for other offences (many of which were not attended), in some cases we found little evidence of effective investigation or supervisory oversight.
- HMIC found that the Integrated Offender Management scheme, in place to manage those offenders likely to cause most harm to the communities, is very

well managed. There are regular meetings with key partners and a structured approach is used to identify and assess risk.

- The force was able to provide HMIC with the number of named suspects that are yet to be arrested or interviewed. However, the force was unable to provide HMIC with the number of suspects who had failed to answer their police bail. Without this information, the force may be unable to ensure it has effective arrangements for managing outstanding named suspects and offenders.
- A small sample of named suspect files, including those circulated as wanted on PNC, indicated that activity had been documented and properly supervised in a number of cases.

Freeing up time

- The force has a limited understanding of demand and how its resources are distributed, and is taking steps to build up a more sophisticated understanding of demand. This includes in-depth analysis of different types of incidents and policing activity. More work could also be done to identify and address those tasks that are not deemed by the force to be the responsibility of the police.
- The force does not have a clear understanding of how staff are spending their time. Although some basic management information is available, it is limited. In addition at the time of the inspection the force did not have an accurate picture as to which officers and staff were on duty and who was available for deployment.
- The current structures and resourcing levels on the frontline are inhibiting the ability of the response function (a third of the force's police officer resource) to be productive and effective. The force was aware of the impact from the limited resource levels in its response function, and 60 new constables have been recruited, with their training starting in April 2014.
- The force is not able to identify the amount of savings in staff time that has been made as a result of changes introduced or as a result of new technology being implemented.
- HMIC identified that the force is investing in the use of mobile technology devices, such as replacing Blackberries with tablets, to enable officers to access force systems whilst on patrol. Staff were very positive about the introduction and use of mobile technology.
- The Metis programme, where new ways of working will be supported by new technology, is vitally important to reducing costs across the Strategic Alliance.

Yours sincerely



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Copied to Mr Edward Major
HMIC Liaison Officer