

COMMISSIONER SAYS CHIEF CONSTABLE MUST 'ACT IMMEDIATELY' TO IMPROVE RESPONSE TO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

HMIC Report commissioned by PCC praises commitment of front line officers and staff but says it has 'serious concern' about the quality of protection children receive

South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner Shaun Wright says today that the Chief Constable must 'act immediately' to improve the response of the force to child sexual exploitation in the wake of a report raising serious concern about the quality of protection it provides for children across the region.

Having set CSE as a force priority, Mr Wright commissioned HMIC (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary) to assess the effectiveness of the force's approach to protecting children from sexual exploitation and to develop recommendations for improvements. Its report, '*South Yorkshire Police's Response to Child Sexual Exploitation*' is published today (Monday, November 11)

Inspectors say the force is committed to tackling child sexual exploitation but an inconsistent approach across the force area gave them '*serious concern*' about the quality of protection children receive. Among the areas for improvement, the report says that the leadership provided by the Chief Constable for child sexual exploitation was '*unclear*' to many police officers and staff.

HMIC says that '*as a matter of urgency*' the force must put the strategic priorities of the PCC in the area of child sexual exploitation into operational delivery on the ground, adding 'This situation must not be allowed to continue.'

Mr. Wright said today that whilst he was pleased the report recognised the commitment and efforts of front line staff, he was '*extremely disappointed*' that the force had failed to translate his strategic priority into operational effectiveness. He said the Chief Constable must now 'act immediately' to introduce the recommendations detailed in the report. He has also written to HMIC requesting the provision of specialist assistance to support the Chief Constable to deliver all the improvements and recommendations in the report.

The Commissioner says today:

"This current situation has to change. The report makes a number of recommendations, with the most urgent to be implemented immediately and others within three and six months. I fully support the recommendations and have instructed the Chief Constable that he must ensure they are in place within the time frames set out by the inspectors."

"The commitment and effort of officers and staff on the front line of this most heinous of crimes is fully appreciated by me and rightly recognised by the inspectors. However, there is

clearly a failure of management to turn my, and the public of South Yorkshire's, key strategic priority into operational effectiveness uniformly across the whole force area.

Inspectors said that both the Commissioner and the Chief Constable had made it clear that preventing and responding to child sexual exploitation is a top priority of the force. Between January and March 2013 all of the force's 1,700 front line staff received specialist training and the report says they were all, '*deeply committed*' to their work; and were '*conscientious, enthusiastic and focussed on achieving good outcomes for children.*'

Although the force was found to have made '*considerable efforts*' to improve its response to child sexual exploitation, with '*pockets*' of good and effective practice, the approach varied significantly across the four districts.

The protection of children from sexual exploitation was one of the key objectives set by the Commissioner in his Police and Crime Plan published after his election a year ago. Among measures introduced to support that objective was the provision of an additional £0.5 million investment, provided by a council tax increase, to fund an extra 10 Public Protection Unit officers, specialist training and the establishment of a countywide CSE Forum to ensure the sharing of best practise and collaboration between involved agencies.

Between January 1 and September 30, 2013 police across the force were involved in 425 investigations into child sexual exploitation. There have been a number of high profile prosecutions and convictions with further cases due to reach court early in 2014.

The 40-page report examined and makes recommendations in 11 areas; leadership, strategies, management, training, structures, processes, intelligence gathering, innovation, benchmarking, compliance with national guidance and the robustness of partnership working arrangements

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Note to editors: The full report is available on the website of the Police and Crime Commissioner – www.southyorkshire-pcc.gov.uk