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Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services  
6th Floor Globe House  
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**31<sup>st</sup> May 2022**

Dear Wendy,

**North Yorkshire Police  
National Child Protection Inspection  
Response - s55 Police Act 1996**

This letter complements Chief Constable Lisa Winward's letter to you dated 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022, in the above regard, enclosing the updated North Yorkshire Police Action Plan which set out the force's progress and the plans and anticipated timescales for further changes.

This letter also sets out my response to the findings of the inspection in line with s55 Police Act 1996.

The report is of concern and disappointment to the Chief Constable and I.

It showed that while the Inspectorate found examples of good practice during your inspection in November 2021, it found inconsistency in North Yorkshire Police's treatment of children across the cases examined.

I believe that all children deserve to grow up in a safe environment, cared for and protected from harm. But too many do not, and our police forces have an important role in identifying those who are vulnerable, protecting them and meeting their needs. That is why both the Chief Constable and I were candid in acknowledging that what this inspection found is unacceptable.

Sometimes not enough has been done to ensure that North Yorkshire Police can show that vulnerable children are as protected as they should be in North Yorkshire and York. All too often the failings come despite the best efforts of those who have a policing role to safeguard them.

The findings of this inspection are not seen as a reflection on individual North Yorkshire Police officers and staff and the important roles they undertake every day. I am pleased to see that the report noted that Inspectors witnessed the dedication and commitment from the officers and staff who conducted child abuse investigations, while often working in difficult circumstances.

As Commissioner, I am satisfied that a robust action plan has been developed and that a clear reporting and accountability structure is in place within North Yorkshire Police to address the recommendations and monitor progress.

## **Recommendations**

The areas which have been identified by the Inspectorate for immediate action have all been addressed and work is well underway for those recommendations which were identified by the Inspectorate for action within three months with much improvement already made to date.

North Yorkshire Police have progressed at speed with action to improve its policies, practices, leadership and governance which:

- Provides clear guidance to the control room staff to help them make the right decisions on officer response.
- Helps officers to expand their consideration of how they capture and take account of the 'voice of the child' through delivery of enhanced awareness and training.
- Brings greater clarity and consistency to its missing children arrangements and practices, including supervision, investigation and sharing of information through a revised overarching Missing Person policy which covers both adults and children.
- Improves how they work with and share information with partners about children at risk of exploitation.
- Shares the right information, with the right people, at the right time.
- Assigns investigations to officers with the right level of skills and capability.
- Ensures they work with partners to be able to take children to an appropriate place of safety and how they manage the detention of children when appropriate.
- Uses the appropriate systems to share information about registered sex offenders.
- Improves the level of awareness, understanding and skills in the area of Child Sexual Exploitation.

I am pleased that as part of the work being delivered, North Yorkshire Police have sought external guidance and expertise to progress key recommendations to ensure any response to the recommendations is reflective of good practice identified in forces nationally, through engagement with HMICFRS, National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing.

## **Activity to Date**

Upon receiving the *draft* report on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022, North Yorkshire Police informed me and my Executive Management Team of the report findings immediately. A full formal briefing followed four weeks later. I was concerned by the content of the report, but supportive of the draft plans presented to me which were being implemented without delay.

I am aware North Yorkshire Police were given six weeks from the date of the publication of the report on 29<sup>th</sup> March to respond with an Action Plan. I was reassured that North Yorkshire Police were able to set out their draft

plans to you on 2<sup>nd</sup> March and further confirm them in full on 28<sup>th</sup> April, at which stage the Chief Constable provided you with the updated Action Plan.

This demonstrated to me that North Yorkshire Police had not waited for the publication of the report before taking action. The Chief Constable and her Senior Leadership Team took the report and its findings seriously and acted quickly to address the recommendation presented in the report and make improvements in the service.

I was encouraged that North Yorkshire Police took swift action to implement a Gold command structure following receipt of the draft report in January to address the findings and look at measures that could be implemented immediately to improve the service.

The first NCPI Gold meeting took place on 4<sup>th</sup> February, which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable Mabs Hussain. This strategic group addresses the issues raised within the report and tracks improvements against the action Plan. The Gold group initially met on a fortnightly basis to ensure a clear action plan was in place and has now moved to meeting on a monthly basis.

As you will be aware, your colleague Steve Cotter has unfettered access to North Yorkshire Police and in this instance, attends the Gold group to hear of the progress being made. The Chief Constable and I are grateful for his attendance and supportive input.

Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Lindsey Butterfield chairs the Silver group, ensuring delivery and progress against the action plan and reports directly to the Gold group. The Bronze leads own and deliver against each action within the Plan which includes the Heads of Safeguarding, Crime, Customer Contact, Criminal Justice and Custody, Learning and Development and further supported by People Services, Business Insight and Communications.

I was pleased to learn that North Yorkshire Police appointed one of their recently retired Sergeants into the role of Child Protection Coordinator to support the ongoing work. The Child Protection Coordinator brings with her a wealth of policing knowledge and experience over 30 years with most of her career spent as a Detective safeguarding vulnerable people. The role will assist in co-ordinating the work to address the recommendations set out within the report.

I have personally attended two Gold meetings in March and May and a member of my Executive Management Team is a permanent member of the group. One of my Commissioning and Partnership Managers also attends the Silver group, ensuring I receive regular updates on progress.

Police, Fire and Crime Panel Members have been provided with a private briefing, delivered by myself, the Chief Constable and the Deputy Chief Constable which respected the embargo placed on the report but gave a summary of the specific areas for improvement and actions being taken.

Along with North Yorkshire Police, I also met with local authority partners in February who have offered their full support in addressing the report's findings and ensuring that children are kept safe in the city and the county.

As you will be aware, it is my responsibility to scrutinise the work of North Yorkshire Police and to hold the Chief Constable to account. You may be aware that my principal formal scrutiny forum is held in public and streamed live on the internet, as well as being promoted on social media. This Public Accountability Meeting sits on a regular cycle and can also, where necessary, take place outside of that cycle where the public interest so dictates. Acknowledging and addressing the findings of a report of this kind, in the most public manner possible, was an uncomfortable prospect but one which was absolutely right in the public interest. Together with the Chief Constable, I take the view that open and frank public scrutiny builds public confidence, even where there are shortcomings to explore and lessons to learn. I therefore held a special 'deep dive' Public Accountability Meeting on the HMICFRS National Child Protection Inspection on 8<sup>th</sup> April, immediately after the report was published. This provided North Yorkshire Police the opportunity to set out their response and approach to improving the service they deliver in protecting children.

At the special Public Accountability Meeting, North Yorkshire Police presented the work which had already taken place by 8<sup>th</sup> April to address:

- the missing children arrangements;
- improving officer and staff's understanding of child sexual exploitation;
- the management of registered sex offenders and;
- recommendations which require support from partner agencies.

My OPFCC team and I promoted the special Public Accountability Meeting on social media to engage and reach out to the public so they could submit any questions they wished North Yorkshire Police or I to answer. Nine questions were submitted which were either addressed in full at the meeting or followed up with correspondence where further information was provided.

Further information is available on the OPFCC website where the special NCPI Public Accountability Meeting can be viewed which can be accessed via the link <https://www.northyorkshire-pfcc.gov.uk/police-oversight/governance/governance-process/corporate-scrutiny-board/pam-8april2022/>.

## **Next Steps**

As Commissioner, I will review publicly the progress made against the National Child Protection Inspection Action Plan as part of the Safeguarding Public Accountability Meeting which is due to be held on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2022. For this meeting North Yorkshire Police have been asked to present on delivery three months following publication of the report.

North Yorkshire Police are planning to host another engagement session with partners in July to follow on from the local authority partner briefing session held in February. This session will provide partners with an update on progress and provide an opportunity for further questions or shared learning to be addressed which I am very much hoping to attend.

As North Yorkshire Police will be subject to a Victim Service Assessment (VSA) inspection in June 2022, it is taking the opportunity prior to the inspection to reassure itself on the service it provides. As you will be aware, there is some correlation within this area of work and the National Child Protection Inspection in particular the broader issues relating to safeguarding and investigative standards. Therefore, VSA reporting will also be considered

through the Gold Group which is an approach I very much welcome to ensure I remain updated on any key matters relating to the safeguarding of children.

I and my Executive Management Team will continue to attend the Gold group and ensure my Commissioning and Partnerships Manager attends future Silver group meetings, engage with partners and ensure updates are communicated. Through the focused work taking place to address the recommendations, this is providing me with the opportunity to consider areas where further support or funding may be required to ensure North Yorkshire Police continue to make improvements safeguarding the children of North Yorkshire and York.

The Chief Constable has publicly accepted the findings of the Inspectorate and has offered her deepest apologies to any child that North Yorkshire Police have let down or could have protected more effectively. Further, North Yorkshire Police recognise that protecting children is one of the most important things that the police do. As a Force they are working to ensure that the right systems and processes are in place to support officers and staff protecting and safeguarding every child.

I am reassured that the Chief Constable is focused on ensuring North Yorkshire Police is doing everything possible to protect children and has been working at pace to address the issues that were identified in the Inspectorate's report.

As Commissioner, I will ensure that the Chief Constable is held to account on the delivery of the improvements.

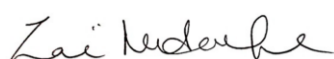
The thrust of this letter has been provided by way of report to the Police, Fire and Crime Panel whose scrutiny of the findings of the report will be taken in July, coinciding with the next Public Accountability Meeting, thus devoting a full day of high-profile focus on North Yorkshire Police's progress towards making the improvements required by the report.

If you would like to receive any further information, then please do not hesitate to contact me or my Executive Management Team as we would be more than happy to assist.

In line with s55(5) Police Act 1996 I propose to publish this letter on my website.

I submit it to you in line with s55(6) for your kind consideration, as well as to the Secretary of State. If you wish to discuss any aspect of this topic with me directly, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Zoë Metcalfe  
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, North Yorkshire