



***PEEL spotlight report - Shining a light on betrayal:
Abuse of position for sexual purpose***

RESPONSE OF DAVID KEANE, POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR CHESHIRE

I welcome Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) report, published 27 September 2019, which sets out the findings of the inspection in relation to abuse of position for sexual purpose. I would agree with the report that the abuse of position for sexual purpose of people who have come into contact with the police for help is abhorrent. Although the number of police officers and staff who abuse their position for a sexual purpose is small across the country, the report rightly shines a light on the issue as the long term effects of such inexcusable behaviour on victims, often vulnerable victims, can be devastating.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) defines abuse of position for a sexual purpose as *'any behaviour by a police officer or police staff member, whether on or off duty, that takes advantage of their position as a member of the police service to misuse their position, authority or powers in order to pursue a sexual or improper emotional relationship with any member of the public'*.

It should be noted that this is a national report, although findings are based upon 2018/2019 PEEL assessments. I fully support the recommendations within the report and having discussed the report with the Chief Constable, I have been assured that work is ongoing to ensure that Cheshire Constabulary complies with such recommendations. I urge Cheshire Constabulary to do all it can to prevent, detect and deal with this serious form of corruption. It is only through this that public confidence can be earned and maintained.

It is pleasing that the report highlights how Cheshire Constabulary has raised awareness by using a transcript from a police interview of a victim of sexual abuse by a police officer to produce a training video that vividly illustrates the devastating effect this type of abuse can have. I applaud such efforts to raise awareness within the organisation.

The importance of vetting is also highlighted within the report and I am reassured that the Constabulary complies with the National Vetting Code of Practice and authorised professional practice (APP) when recruiting (as detailed in the PEEL assessment 2018/2019). Nevertheless, I acknowledge that vetting is only a snapshot in time and I have previously sought assurance from the Chief Constable in relation to vetting renewals and reviews for existing officers and staff within Cheshire Constabulary.

I remain fully committed to one of my key priorities of protecting victims and vulnerable people. I would urge anyone who is the victim of abuse of position for sexual purpose to come forward and report it to the police. Similarly, should any employee of Cheshire Constabulary have concerns behaviour of this nature is taking place, I would encourage reporting to the Counter Corruption Unit or Professional Standards Department.