

**HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY
AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES**

A Call for Help

***An inspection of police contact management through call
handling and control rooms in 2018/19***



RESPONSE OF DAVID KEANE, POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR CHESHIRE

I welcome Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection into police contact management through call handling and control rooms, published 9 July 2020. I welcome the inspection and subsequent recommendations to help the service to manage public contact effectively and to ensure that people receive the prompt and effective response they have every right to expect.

Cheshire Constabulary has produced a Contact Management Plan that is both in line with and complimentary to the National Contact Management Strategy and is currently in the process of reviewing all of its Force Control Centre functions. Public Contact is a critical area of business, especially given that it is often the first interaction a victim of crime will have with the policing service.

The report rightly acknowledges that demand on control rooms is increasing and so needs careful management. As such, investment in Cheshire's Force Control Centre has been one of my key budget priorities for this financial year and I am pleased to have been able to fund an additional 11 posts for this financial year. I have also sought assurances from the Chief Constable, including through my public scrutiny programme, that recruitment plans are in place to ensure staffing levels are maintained throughout the year.

Recent improvements have been made with regard to attrition levels in the Force Control Centre, although this remains a challenge. As the report identified, staff often see the control room as a "stepping stone" into other parts of the police service. I concur with the comments in the report that greater parity with police officer terms and conditions could encourage staff to consider their control room role as a longer-term career. I also welcome the report's recommendation that the forces should "assess the effect of better terms and conditions and career development for control room staff".

I also welcome the report highlighting the importance of wellbeing and support for control room staff and the recognition that the report has given to the impact of "overwhelming demand and stress", as well as the risk of trauma. In Cheshire, this is recognised and staff in the control room are given exactly the same help and support as their police officer colleagues. This includes control room staff being included in debriefs and given access to the same support and counselling through the occupational health service. In addition, we are currently progressing plans to increase the psychological wellbeing offer in Cheshire as part of a wider review of our occupational health provision.

HMICFRS has rightly identified that demand is not only increasing in volume but is becoming more complex. In particular, it states "call handlers need more knowledge, skills and support to deal with increasingly difficult situations". A review of the shift pattern in the Force Control Centre in Cheshire will not only seek to ensure our resources are more closely aligned to demand but will also build in dedicated time for staff training and continued professional development.

In addition, the report includes the importance of managing demand by working with other organisations. In Cheshire, work is already underway to site a NWAS clinician within the Force Deployment Centre on key days and dates of the week, with a view to examining the scope to reduce the number of times where the deployment of an officer is required.

I agree with the recommendations provided within the report to improve the effectiveness of police contact management. I will be following the Constabulary's progress on these matters closely through my scrutiny programme.

David Keane
Police & Crime Commissioner
01 September 2020