

**Criminal Justice Joint Inspection on the impact of the pandemic on
the Criminal Justice System**

RESPONSE OF DAVID KEANE, POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR CHESHIRE

I welcome Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report: 'A joint view of the Criminal Justice Chief Inspectors on the Criminal Justice System's response to COVID-19' published on the 19th January 2021 which I raised with the Chief Constable at a recent public scrutiny meeting. I note that this report was an inspection covering the impact of the pandemic on the criminal justice system (CJS) however I am concerned about what the potential long-term impact of Covid-19 related court backlogs will have on the Constabulary.

The report references how the pandemic has impacted those in the CJS and beyond, and how the risks caused by the delays are affecting both those in custody and for victims.

We cannot underestimate the risks posed to our most vulnerable victims and I have sought reassurance from the chief constable that appropriate support is given to victims where they are potentially facing lengthy delays.

In Cheshire, we have worked in partnership to support our most vulnerable and Cheshire's Harm Reduction Unit (HRU) has developed women's centres as well as the creation of a vulnerability hub to provide safeguarding. We have also sought funding for a perpetrator management programme to change behaviours and reduce reoffending as well as a continued focus on restorative justice and engagement with charities and local authorities.

The report rightly acknowledges that the backlog in our courts is of huge concern, and the pandemic has only exacerbated a system where demand was already exceeding capacity. As chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board this is something I will continue to keep a close watch on, and applaud the way the service has adapted in Cheshire to be in a stronger position than many in these difficult times.

The report only strengthens my belief that our justice system as a whole requires proper government investment and a real focus to address the challenges that lie ahead.



David Keane
Police & Crime Commissioner
9th March 2021