

Sir Thomas Winsor, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services – Written Evidence (PSC0079)

Thank you for your email of 7 October 2021.

2. You asked for a short letter explaining my rationale for stating in my email of 7 October 2021 that HMICFRS does not require new powers to hold local agencies to account for how effectively they collaborate and support early intervention to improve long-term outcomes for children. This letter provides that rationale, by explaining the two major inspection programmes related to child protection which we conduct within our current remit. The breadth, depth and successes of these inspection programmes provide me with the assurance that our current powers allow us to effectively assess forces' performance in this crucial area of their work.
3. HMICFRS conducts two major inspection programmes of the police approach to children in England. These are the National Child Protection Inspection (NCPI) programme; and the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) programme. As was discussed in the Committee's evidence session on Wednesday 8 September 2021, JTAIs are conducted jointly with Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. They are short, focused inspections of multi-agency child protection arrangements.
4. In both programmes, we put the experiences of children at the centre of our analysis. We use that analysis to support learning and development. We assess decision making, leadership, training, partnership working, prevention and early intervention activity, and awareness of safeguarding responsibilities.
5. As JTAIs were discussed in some detail in the evidence session, I focus for the remainder of this letter on our NCPI programme.
6. NCPIs are single-agency inspections of all police forces in England and Wales. We make recommendations to police forces for improving child protection practice. Follow-up activity is an integral part of the programme; it allows us to assess the progress each force is making in its work to improve the services for the safety and protection of children. We have found that in every force we have returned to after a previous inspection there has been progress in achieving better results for children who were at risk of harm.
7. Our reports provide a powerful analysis of how well police forces serve the needs of vulnerable children. These reports also support our work with national organisations, including the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the Home Office and College of Policing, to ensure that the findings from our inspections are informing longer-term planning and policy development.
8. The NCPI and JTAI programmes are therefore comprehensive and thorough, flexible and far-reaching. I do not consider new powers would enhance them.

25 October 2021