Home Office

HOME SECRETARY
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Chief Constables
Force Leads for Domestic Violence and Abuse

27 MAR 2014

Dear Chief Constable and Force Lead

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's Report on the Police Response to Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic abuse is an appalling crime. That is why I have made tackling it one of my top priorities as Home Secretary. Last September, I commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) to conduct a comprehensive review into the police response to domestic violence and abuse. I did this because I was concerned that too many forces were paying lip service to domestic violence following a succession of reports by the Independent Police Complaints Commission into specific domestic homicides.

HMIC's findings are truly shocking. The report highlights that the current police response to domestic abuse is failing victims. There is a lack of visible leadership and direction by senior officers. Poor management and supervision means the right behaviours, attitudes and actions of officers are not reinforced, and that officers lack the skills and knowledge necessary to engage confidently and competently with victims of domestic abuse. Alarmingly, the report also highlights unacceptable weaknesses in core policing activities: investigating crime, preventing crime, bringing offenders to justice and keeping victims safe. This is simply not good enough.

It is now up to police forces, supported by the College of Policing, to act on HMIC's recommendations and swiftly improve the service they offer to victims of domestic abuse. This report provides a vital catalyst for the police to drive fundamental and lasting change. This must be capitalised on, and quickly.

You should not underestimate the scale of the challenge. Changing the culture of the police must come from the top down to ensure that priorities on paper are translated into operational reality. It is my expectation that every

police force will have an action plan in place by September 2014. I expect Chief Constables to be fully supported in this work by police force leads on domestic abuse. Leaders at all levels share responsibility for ensuring changes reach frontline staff. I am inviting all force leads on domestic abuse to meet me to outline their plans for addressing HMIC's findings. My office will be in touch in the next week to arrange this.

To help police forces make the substantial changes that are needed, I will chair a national oversight group to drive forward the necessary improvements. I will also be implementing mandatory data capture for these crimes with effect from 2015. This will help monitor progress in improving the police response. In the interim, I expect all forces to take immediate action to collect the data on domestic abuse needed to safeguard victims.

I know there are many dedicated officers who deal with victims sensitively, build strong cases against offenders, and save lives. But as today's report makes clear, the police need to do more.

HMIC will be following up this review with further inspections to ensure its recommendations are acted upon.

I am copying this letter to HMIC and Police and Crime Commissioners.

Yours sincerely

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP