

Dear Home Secretary

### **Response to the HMIC inspection into domestic violence**

I am writing in response to the recent 'Everybody's Business' HMIC inspection into police responses to domestic abuse.

I am disappointed by the shortcomings the Inspectorate found in how Greater Manchester Police approaches domestic abuse.

The report's findings chime with work my office carried out with victims of domestic violence last November to gather evidence of their experience of the criminal justice system. Their testimony was fed back directly to police and other criminal justice agencies at a public forum.

GMP have subsequently produced a detailed action plan, based on the evidence gathered from victims and the findings of the inspection report. This action plan is included with this response and is being sent on GMP's behalf. A task group has also been established to lead and develop this work – and ensure that the plan is effectively delivered. This group will report to me on a six-weekly basis so I can assess its progress, and it will also report formally to my public forums.

What is clear is that, while GMP provides a Rolls-Royce service by the specialist domestic abuse unit to those victims deemed most at risk, the majority of victims do not access this service and the subsequent response they receive is patchy.

On a strategic and leadership level GMP could not be clearer: domestic abuse is one of the main priorities for both me and the Chief Constable. The challenge is to translate this priority into day-to-day action.

Having a specialist unit means there is a danger that rank and file officers will take the view that domestic violence is a matter for that unit. To ensure this does not happen, a major cultural change is necessary within GMP. Unfortunately a consistent approach has not been taken to tackling domestic abuse. I want to see domestic abuse placed at the top of the agenda for daily tasking meetings, to embed with rank and file officers that this is a real priority for the service, and a real priority for them in their day-to-day activities. You will see in the action plan that all domestic abuse incidents attended by response officers will, in future, have to be reviewed by the sergeant, and the effectiveness of these reviews will be quality-assured by dip sampling to ensure these reviews are not being treated as a box-ticking exercise.

This initiative is not glamorous or particularly eye-catching, but is necessary to ensure that domestic abuse is treated as core business. Other ways in which this will be locked into GMP's way of doing business is through improved training, which will put at its core the experience of victims. My office will also start to carry random checks on domestic abuse victims' experiences to build a picture of how the service is improving and where it is not, carry out remedial action.

Despite the establishment of this police working group, I remain concerned that the changes that the police introduce will have a minimal positive impact on the victims of domestic abuse unless partner organisations are involved in the development of the work. This is one element that I intend to focus my scrutiny on. One way in which I will do this is by bringing partner agencies together in a

round table event to discuss exactly how they can contribute to the work positively and also enable each partner organisation to contribute and sign up to the plan that the police develop. It is extremely important that all those agencies that have a stake in tackling domestic abuse are involved in this work.

We have seen some good progress in this area, albeit with a recognition there is much further to go. One piece of partnership work that I am currently funding as Police and Crime Commissioner is a pilot for some Accident and Emergency departments in Greater Manchester to host a domestic abuse support worker. The rationale for this project was to address the needs of the “silent” victims of domestic abuse, those who are reluctant to report their abuse to the police. Initial indications are that the pilot is a success in terms of the early identification of victims that otherwise may have slipped through the net. While still in its first stage, the pilot demonstrates how the police are not the only responsible agency in this battle and the importance of engagement with health. I hope that this pilot will provide enough positive evidence to convince health partners to invest in similar schemes across Greater Manchester in the future.

On the issue of partnership working, I would like to raise a concern about this inspection. The overarching report that was issued by HMIC is entitled “Everybody’s Business” and on page five acknowledges that; “other agencies and partners share the responsibility to tackle domestic abuse and keep victims safe; it does not rest solely with the police”. However, I believe that by having this report as a single agency inspection an opportunity was missed to assess performance in this area across the criminal justice system. This joint inspection approach has been successful in other criminal justice arenas, such as the recent joint inspection by HMI Probation, HMI Constabulary, HM Crown Prosecution and the Care Quality Commission, into the treatment of offenders with learning disabilities within the criminal justice system. For an issue as prolific as domestic abuse, which cuts across the entire criminal justice system, a joint inspection approach would have been invaluable.

That being said, this report raises important concerns which require action. It is clear that police still have a long way to go on the journey of providing an effective service to victims of domestic abuse. I believe there is a genuine willingness to rise to this challenge within GMP, both at leadership and rank and file levels. The picture is not all bad, victims should feel confident about contacting police – there is some excellent good practice out there, and a dedication from the vast majority of frontline officers to do their best in an environment shrinking resources and increased demand – but this inspection report acts as a wake-up call to police, and will be instrumental in delivering the service improvements that are required.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Lloyd". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tony Lloyd  
Commissioner