



Home Office

Home Secretary

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HMCI Andy Cooke

1 September 2023

Dear Andy

As you recently set out in your annual State of Policing report, it is essential that the police get the basics right and concentrate on those issues of greatest importance to the public. The public should have the confidence that the police are focused on using their time and resources to address the issues that matter most to them: getting the basics right on investigating crime, being a visible presence in neighbourhoods and responding effectively to those they are there to serve.

I recognise that policing is a difficult job, and I remain hugely grateful for the work Chief Constables and their forces do day in and day out, often in challenging circumstances. I appreciate there is often a difficult balance to be struck in carrying out these duties in a changing society, where views can become polarised. However, I am concerned that instances of police involvement in politically contested matters and the influence of activism, risks skewing policing and operational decisions made by some Chief Constables. Whilst many of these challenges fall to individual police leaders, the whole policing system needs to come together to ensure Chief Constables can succeed in their mission and address any structural or systemic barriers.

I am writing to all Chief Constables (copied to PCCs) in parallel with this letter to be clear that I am concerned that public displays of allegiance with political causes opens some forces up to accusations of virtue-signalling, and that related activity by others (such as staff networks), is having a negative effect on community confidence. That effect may be felt by either distracting policing from its core role of preventing and detecting crime and bringing offenders to justice or by giving the impression that policing is distracted from that role.

The essential function of the police is to uphold the law. I am concerned that resources which might otherwise have been allocated to dealing with thefts, robberies and assaults are giving way to other activities. Further, that when officers adopt or participate in political or social campaigns, for example, by taking the knee, they risk losing the support of the public. This is not common sense policing and I hope that we can work together to prevent police, especially those in leadership positions, from committing themselves to more and more identity-related causes.

I am therefore writing to commission HMICFRS, under section 54(2B) of the Police Act 1996, to undertake a review of the extent to which such involvement may be impacting on the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of operational policing in England and Wales by influencing policing policy, priorities and practice. This would include, for example, the involvement in political matters, whether these are communicated

externally by any means or intended for internal circulation only. Such matters may include commenting on and responding to commentary on contested issues, and the involvement of policing more generally in issues such as, but not limited to, “gender identity” politics, critical race theory or climate activism.

My officials will be in touch shortly to discuss the detailed scope and terms of reference for this review. However, as minimum, I would like it to consider:

- Policies and processes that go further than, or contravene, obligations set out in the Equality Act 2010, and how those impact operational decision making;
- The quality and impartiality of associated training provided to implement such policies and processes, and by which organisation(s) this is delivered;
- Whether errors have been made in relation to operational decision-making, for example in light of the Miller case in 2021; and the operational value of non-crime hate incidents.
- The selection process for and transparency relating to groups, sometimes called ‘independent advisory groups’, that are consulted on revisions to policy or process, how the views expressed by those groups are balanced against others, and what consideration is given to other groups that may be impacted as a result;
- Communications with the public on these issues, including via social media, and the impact on public perceptions of the police as a serious and impartial law enforcement agency.
- Whether there are systemic issues that prevent policing from being, or being seen to be, impartial, especially in contentious matters.

In terms of the timings for this inspection, I would welcome your report published by the end of March 2024 and would be grateful for being briefed on your initial findings by the end of December 2023.

I appreciate HMICFRS prioritising this work and would like to thank you for the quick and constructive way in which you have engaged with this request.

Yours ever,



Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP