

BEV HUGHES
DEPUTY MAYOR
OF GREATER
MANCHESTER

Rt Hon Priti Patel,
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

1st November 2019

SUBJECT: HMICFRS Leading Lights Report: An inspection of the police service's arrangements for the selection and development of chief officers.

I write in response to the publication of the HMICFRS Leading Lights report which inspected existing arrangements for the selection and development of chief officers.

The police service needs strong, capable leaders to enable the effective delivery of policing services to our communities. These leaders need to be supported by a meaningful infrastructure of policies, processes and training to support continuous professional and personal development. This is essential if the service is to attract competent future leaders and ensure that they have the skills, experience and confidence required to make the difficult decisions expected of the role.

The inspection findings provide a valuable insight to some of the issues faced in the recruitment and development of chief officers.

It is evident that there are several areas of disparity and inconsistent practice across the service, starting with the endorsements to the assessment centre, through to the level of support provided around continuous professional development. These inconsistencies need to be addressed. The HMICFRS recommendation to reconstitute the professional reference group is welcomed as this could provide a holistic review to the issues that surfaced through the inspection.

Whilst there are no direct recommendations for chief constables, I would support the general ethos of the recommendations made to the College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council. I understand much of this work is already under consideration at a national level and I would encourage the continuation of this work.

GMCA, Churchgate House, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU

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The report makes the recommendation that prospective Chief Constables have served in another force or policing organisation for at least two years.

Whilst this is certainly one way of ensuring that prospective chief officers have the necessary wealth and range of experience, and working across a number of different police services is clearly desirable, the proposal needs to be evaluated to avoid any unintended consequences.

These consequences include the potential to having to overlook sufficiently qualified and experienced candidates solely on the basis that they have only ever worked for one police force. Additionally, it could restrict an individual's professional ambition and development, if due to personal circumstances, they are unable to relocate into a new area. This could lead to the creation of an artificial barrier and offers little to no incentive for the police service to professionally develop their existing workforce.

Finally, in addition to the work to professionalise the role of chief officers, I feel that further work is required to review the support networks available. The role, by its very nature, attracts a lot of pressure and demands and it is important that officers know how to access any support they may need. I would echo the sentiments raised by HMICFRS in relation to this and would support the ongoing work by the Chief Police Officers' Staff Association in the development of a support framework.

Yours sincerely



Baroness Beverley Hughes
Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester
Policing, Crime and Criminal Justice

GMCA, Churchgate House, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 6EU

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