

22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017

The Rt Honourable Amber Rudd MP  
Home Secretary  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Home Secretary

**RESPONSE TO 'STOLEN FREEDOM: THE POLICING RESPONSE TO MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING' PUBLISHED ON 24 OCTOBER 2017**

I am grateful for the HMICFRS's report into Modern Slavery yet concerned at the findings that victims of modern slavery and human trafficking are being let down at every stage. It is clear that there is more to be done to tackle these crimes. I read the report with great interest, not only because Avon and Somerset Constabulary were one of the ten forces visited for the field work of the inspection, but because these crimes are prioritised within my Police and Crime Plan under the primary priority to 'Protect the most vulnerable from harm'.

In the inspection debrief, the Constabulary were commended for the passion and commitment shown by the strategic and tactical leads who were found to be highly knowledgeable and approachable. Contrary to the overall assessment of the national picture, the call handlers in the Constabulary were also found to be good at identifying vulnerability and the Force Crime Incident Registrar to be knowledgeable.

However, there is a clear need to broaden awareness on the frontline just as in the general population. The Constabulary have taken positive steps towards doing this, from producing a clear and concise briefing to roll out to officers and staff, to creating an engaging awareness raising communications campaign (#Letsnailit) that reached out to the local communities. As a response the National Modern Slavery Helpline received a significant increase in calls and the Constabulary started at least two investigations as a result. I was also pleased to open the recent Modern Slavery and Sex Work Tactical Advisor CPD day which attracted around 100 officers and staff from across the Constabulary and will no doubt see further improvements to the policing response in Avon and Somerset.

I have noted the nationally applicable recommendations which relate to the areas of:

- leadership;
- intelligence;
- victim identification and initial response;
- crime recoding;
- investigations;
- prevention; and
- learning.

I have asked the Constabulary's strategic lead to advise me how the Constabulary will respond to the recommendations and whether any opportunities can be taken up to replicate any of the approaches or processes noted as good practice within the report. This will be addressed in the assurance report I have commissioned for review in March 2018 at the Police and Crime Board.

As part of demonstrating my prioritisation of these crimes, I have commissioned a modern slavery support service, provided by Unseen UK, to ensure victims can be effectively supported. We have an active Anti-Slavery Partnership in the force area and I have been pleased to join fellow PCCs on the National Anti-Trafficking and Modern Slavery Network.

I am starting to see Modern Slavery become a focus for the Constabulary within daily business as well as frameworks such as Organised Crime Group disruption panels, which demonstrates that advancements are being made. In order to maintain this progress, I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for improving the force response to this area of complex crime.

This response is published on the OPCC website (<http://www.avonandsomerset-pcc.gov.uk/Openness/Audits-and-Inspections/Her-Majestys-Inspectorate-of-Constabulary.aspx>).

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Sue Mountstevens".

**SUE MOUNTSTEVENS**

Police and Crime Commissioner  
for Avon & Somerset

cc. Wendy Williams, HMICFRS  
Chief Constable Andy Marsh, Avon & Somerset Constabulary