

Our Ref: PCC / LC / 2955  
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Date: 21 December 2016

**By email only**

Dear Sir

I write in relation to your letter dated 22 August 2016 and note its content. It was unfortunate that you were unable to attend my recent meeting with Tony Farrell and David Pidcock, where we may have been able to discuss some of the issues you raise.

I thought, therefore, that it would be helpful to update you on the subjects you made reference to.

**Child Sexual Exploitation**

When I became PCC serious issues were being raised about the force's failure to act in relation to child sexual exploitation (CSE).

I made clear in my Police and Crime Plan that protecting vulnerable people was, and continues to be, one of my three strategic priorities. Specifically I have provided funding to the Force to put additional staff into the Public Protection Unit and improve training. I also set up an Independent Advisory Panel of Victims, Survivors and their Families to work with the police to help them design and improve services. In addition I appointed Professor John Drew to lead an Independent Review looking at how the Force had handled reports of child sexual exploitation across the county and to assure myself that nothing like Rotherham had happened elsewhere. Professor John Drew was able to give me that assurance while pointing to further measures that would need to be taken. It is significant to note that those individuals responsible for grooming, raping and abusing teenage girls in Rotherham are being, and will continue to be brought to justice for these heinous crimes.

I am also grateful of the support that South Yorkshire Police receives from others. The National Crime Agency is currently investigating reports of non-familial CSE at the request of the Force. More than 11,000 lines of enquiry had been identified by the end of October 2016.

The College of Policing is also independently rationalising the 220 recommendations provided to the Force by Professor John Drew and the HMIC. I will be discussing the findings of this work with the Chief Constable in the near future.

**Hillsborough**

The Hillsborough inquests have been another huge concern for me in my time as PCC. As you may know, my only involvement in the Hillsborough Inquests was to provide financial

support where obliged to do so, specifically for those who required legal representation because they were designated 'properly interested persons' status by the coroner.

From start to finish, the cost of funding the legal team of officers has been about £25m – a figure that would have been impossible to sustain without government help. Consequently, I have had to make a number of special grant applications, followed by various trips to the Home Secretary to plead our cause.

In the meantime, I've had to make difficult decisions that have resulted in me being threatened twice with Judicial Review in the High Court – I sought to cap the legal fees we had to pay. The longer the inquests went on, the more the fees mounted up. The first time, the court found in my favour and the second time, the case was withdrawn. Capping the fees saved thousands of pounds but it was highly stressful making these sorts of decisions when I did not know what the outcome would be.

In summary, it has been an extraordinary period for South Yorkshire Police. I doubt whether there is any force area in the country has had to face what we have had to face here and will go on facing for a year or two yet.

I am, however, confident that the new Chief Constable, Stephen Watson, is the right person to lead SYP in a positive direction and I am sure that people will respond to that as his vision begins to take hold.

All good wishes,



**Dr Alan Billings**  
**South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner**