

***POLICING AND MENTAL HEALTH: PICKING UP THE
PIECES***

**RESPONSE OF DAVID KEANE, POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR
CHESHIRE**

I welcome Her Majesty's Inspectors' report, published 27 November 2018, which sets out the findings of the effectiveness strand of the PEEL programme with a specific focus on policing and mental health. I agree with Inspectors that, whilst officers are doing a good job in extremely difficult circumstances, we are asking them to pick up the pieces of a broken mental health service, and this cannot continue indefinitely.

It is of credit to the police service that Inspectors found strong leadership and governance and officers deal well with those in crisis, however those in crisis should be cared for in a healthcare setting rather than in a police cell or a police car for their own safety. It is not appropriate that people are brought to the brink of crisis by overstretched and under pressure mental health services.

People in mental health crisis are first and foremost ill and it is imperative that they are cared for appropriately, and whilst police officers have received training to help them recognise the signs of poor mental health and understand how to offer support to those in need, they are not able to offer the expert advice and support that a mental health professional could provide.

In Cheshire we have been able to develop strong relationships with our local mental health providers. We have representation on the Criminal Justice Board which enables collaboration and problem solving at the highest level of criminal justice leaderships. Furthermore, through joint funded initiatives across policing and mental health we have seen the continued success of our street triage project. The result has been in the year to September 2018 Cheshire only had one Section 136 detainee in police custody. This remains one too many but is a real sign of positive progress.

I will be discussing these recommendations with the new Chief Constable when they are in post and will be asking them to assure me that Cheshire Constabulary is doing all it can to ensure that the true scale of the demand is being identified and that we are working with partners to, as far as possible, ensure that police officers are able to support those in crisis. I will also ensure the matter remains at the forefront of discussions at the Criminal Justice Board to drive forward the best possible partnership working across Cheshire for the benefit of residents.

