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**Efficiency Spotlight Report: The impact of recruitment and retention on the criminal justice system.
Response from Simon Foster, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.**

Published on the 15th February 2024, this report offers an insightful evaluation of the prevailing situation regarding recruitment and retention throughout the criminal justice system. The combination of constrained resources and heightened demand placed upon the police significantly impacts the ability of police officers and staff to fulfil their duties effectively. The Inspectorate's acknowledgment of the strain faced by individuals within the criminal justice system is evident, particularly concerning the insufficient and inequitable funding and workforce resources in certain police forces.

The Police Uplift Programme, an agenda which aimed to recruit 20,000 additional officers across England and Wales, was recognised within the report. The investment made in the police officer uplift programme throughout the past three financial years has been positively received. However, it is concerning that as a consequence of the way that the government decided to allocate the national uplift programme, only 1,218 out of the 2,221 officers lost by West Midlands Police (WMP) since 2010 have been reinstated through the baseline distribution of the programme.

In addition, the significant loss of skills, knowledge and experience during austerity combined with a rapid recruitment during the national uplift programme has resulted in a significant imbalance of skills, knowledge and experience within WMP. In particular, 30% of WMP police officers have 3 years or less service and 40% have 5 years or less service.

As of March 2023, WMP is experiencing a shortfall of 698 officers compared to the staffing levels in 2010. Within the same timeframe, 500 Police Community Support Officers have been lost due to budget constraints and challenges in recruitment. The current funding formula is not fit for purpose and is a detriment to the funding of WMP. The use of statistics supporting the formula grant, which are now 11 years old, is a matter of serious concern for police forces across England and Wales, and most notably WMP. The government must present a revised funding formula and precept proposal to ensure the prompt implementation of equitable funding for WMP.

Although the Inspectorate acknowledged the positive impact of the national Police Uplift Programme on recruitment, the report highlights a prevalent issue across certain police forces—a notable turnover of personnel resulting in substantial levels of inexperience and workplace pressure. The primary reason for the turnover in personnel among police officers in WMP is retirement. Therefore, there is a consistent and

significant recruitment drive for probationary officers to maintain the workforce strength of WMP. It is crucial at WMP to recruit officers from various entry routes to ensure a diverse range of knowledge. For instance, in the past 12 months, 20% of new recruits held degrees. In light of these findings, the Inspectorate recommends that the following two areas receive further attention:

‘All agencies should invest more in understanding why staff leave and should use this information to inform future changes to improve recruitment and retention and ensure that the right support and incentives are in place to retain staff’

At present, WMP tracks the reasons behind the personnel turnover on a monthly basis through performance analysis. I am committed to ensuring that the force effectively utilises this data to drive future improvements and enhance existing recruitment and retention initiatives. This entails leveraging insights gleaned from the monitoring process to implement strategic adjustments aimed at addressing any identified issues and fostering a more sustainable workforce. By leveraging this data-driven approach, WMP can proactively respond to workforce challenges and optimise its recruitment and retention strategies for greater effectiveness and long-term success.

‘All agencies should regularly review caseloads, capacity, capability and productivity. This will help to ensure there is adequate supervision and support for staff across the CJS’

The well-being of police officers and staff is fundamental and undergoes continual review at WMP. To enhance support during periods of change, the 'Peer Support' initiative was initiated in April 2023, fostering a collaborative environment for colleagues to assist each other through various challenges. Moreover, WMP has established a strategic alliance with 'Vivup,' an employee assistance scheme providing accessible counselling services and professional support to all employees. This collaboration serves as an indispensable asset, empowering police officers and staff to effectively navigate and mitigate workload-related pressures.

In summary, I appreciate this report for its valuable insights into the effects of recruitment and retention for the police. It offers constructive remarks and recommendations on current issues that affect the entire criminal justice system. I am committed to integrating and prioritising these insights into my ongoing efforts to hold WMP accountable.

Yours faithfully,



Simon Foster

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner