



Home Secretary
50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT

22nd June, 2004

David Westwood QPM
Humberside Police
Priory Road Police Station
Priory Road
Hull, HE5 5SF

Dear Mr Westwood

Sir Michael Bichard's report, published today, on child protection measures, record keeping, vetting and information sharing in Humberside Police and Cambridgeshire Constabulary exposes very serious shortcomings. The report reveals a catalogue of wide-ranging, corporate and systemic failures on the part of Humberside Police over the maintenance of records and the handling of intelligence. It describes the inadequacy of systems to identify the problems which endured for several years, and which included unsatisfactory training for police officers and a lack of effective guidance on record creation, review and deletion.

Sir Michael has also found little evidence of sufficient strategic review of information management systems and no real awareness among senior managers of the scale and nature of the problems. He states that, in such key areas, senior management could and should have done more to identify and deal with the failures especially when others, including HMIC, had drawn attention to the importance of information management. Sir Michael has concluded that there were very serious failings in the senior management at Humberside Police and that the final responsibility for these rests with you as Chief Constable from March 1999 at the latest when you were appointed to the post.

These matters, given the tragic events which led to the establishment of Sir Michael's inquiry, have given rise to grave public concern. They have such significant implications for the efficiency and effectiveness of the force that I am proposing to consider exercising my powers under section 42 of the Police Act 1996 to require the Humberside Police Authority to call upon you to retire or resign. I am writing to the police authority to convey this and to acknowledge that they will also be considering, in the light of Sir Michael's report, what steps are necessary to fulfil their statutory duty to ensure the maintenance of an efficient and effective force – including the possible use of

their powers under section 11 of the Police Act 1996. I have asked HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Keith Povey, to ensure that the professional judgement of HMIC is available to the police authority to assist them in their deliberations. I have asked them to let me know the outcome of these deliberations by 6th July.

In the meantime, I have decided that the findings and conclusions in Sir Michael's report are so damaging to you as Chief Constable that I must take immediate steps to maintain public confidence in the force. I have therefore written to the Chair of Humberside Police Authority requiring the police authority to suspend you, under section 42 (1A) of the Police Act 1996, with immediate effect.

I know that the recent months must have been very difficult for you personally and professionally and that the outcome of Sir Michael's inquiry will affect you deeply. However, I also hope that you will appreciate how important it has been for the reputation of the police service and to confidence in the criminal justice system that we have followed this process and reached these conclusions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Blunkett". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

DAVID BLUNKETT