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**RE: HM TREASURY & DEPARTMENT FOR  
EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

**COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW 2007**

Please find attached response on behalf of Chief Constable Terence Grange in respect of Annex B4: Terms of Reference for the Review of *High Cost, High Harm Families*.

**Key Questions:**

*1 – Who are these families? How can we define them and how many of them are there?*

Identification of such families could be based upon the nature and frequency of involvement with, or referral to, agencies following specific incidents or in response to identified needs.

Considered from a police perspective, involvement with such families could be determined by incidents of domestic violence; child abuse investigation and issues of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect; truanting from school; incidence of antisocial behaviour, missing person reports, and involvement in incidents of vandalism or crime.

The importance of joint agency working is recognised, and identification of such individuals will need to be made on a multi agency basis and such families are likely to be engaged with a number of agencies including education, social services and health. The impact of parents in receipt of benefits as a lifestyle choice and the correlation between long term receipt of benefits and other indicators could also be considered as a means of identifying high risk / high cost families.

It is impossible to accurately estimate an approximate number of such families on a national basis, although identification and subsequent use of appropriate indicators may inform future estimates.

*2/3 – "What progress has already been made in addressing the needs*

*of high cost, high harm families? Can we better align local services to improve identification of these families earlier on and before they become high cost high harm?"*

Progress in this area is inconsistent throughout the country. Any positive developments are a reflection of local initiative.

Co-location of service providers would assist joint working and the identification of families. Greater "service analysis" is required of information, intelligence and activity obtained from all agencies, to jointly identify high risk and high cost families that impact on the resources of all agencies. Information sharing between agencies is essential for this analysis to be effective, with co-location a proven means of increasing communication between different agencies.

Progress would also require a removal of the "dependency approach" as has been achieved within the United States.

*4 - "Are current incentives and levers adequate to deliver co-coordinated responses for families across relevant services such as health, education, housing, social services and the police at local level?"*

It is felt that incentives to work together are insufficient. Reliance is placed upon individual responses to identified issues by the respective agencies, with joint working inhibited by short term funding provision. It is felt that a Government focus upon "glitzy" new initiatives fails to consider the long term funding and detailed implementation required to successfully drive forward change.

*5 -What is the appropriate balance between support and sanctions for these families?*

It is suggested that the review consider the approach taken in the United States to remove long term dependency upon benefits as a lifestyle choice. The identification of targets for "families" and their achievement within a predetermined timescale is a mechanism to ensure improvements are made to their respective situations.

The use of sanctions to achieve identified objectives is supported, and the argument that sanctions will be detrimental to children and families is not accepted. It is felt that sanctions will be necessary, and that failures to achieve objectives that improve the family's circumstances are more harmful.

