

FACULTY OF FORENSIC & LEGAL MEDICINE

of the Royal College of Physicians of London



E-mail forensic.medicine@fflm.ac.uk
Website www.fflm.ac.uk

Registered Charity No 1119599

13 November 2020

Dame Cressida Dick
Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service
comm.po@met.police.uk

Dear Commissioner

We are writing as the President-Elect and Registrar of the Faculty of Forensic & Legal Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians of London (FFLM).

We have heard from several of our members that the forensic medical examiners who are contracted to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) have been given six months written notice to terminate their current contract.

This is a very sad day – many of these doctors have worked for the MPS for years, and the link between the MPS and our organisation is a very long and fruitful one.

The FFLM's stated aims are "raising standards in forensic and legal medicine; protecting vulnerable people". We have worked long and hard on both these aims, through our development training programmes, our educational documents, and our rigorous examinations which offer confidence to commissioners, employers and those who contract with healthcare professionals of all disciplines.

The FFLM is committed to multi-professional working, but believes that this phrase should mean just that – doctors and nurses working together, using their complementary skills, not doctors being replaced entirely with nurses, who maybe working outside their scope of practice without support. Patients who are detained in custody should receive an equivalent level of care as in any other area of the NHS.

We are very concerned not just for our members, but for what this will mean for the overall clinical forensic medical services and for patient safety. We believe that nurses welcome the presence of appropriately qualified and experienced doctors within their team. In no other health care setting of which we are aware, is health care delivered entirely by nurses, with no recourse to medical advice from a consultant (and certainly not without a formal advanced nurse practitioner qualification). This is especially worrying to us because people detained in custody have multiple vulnerabilities and complex medical needs. We believe patients in these circumstances deserve excellent medical care, which is best delivered by a skilled team of well-trained healthcare professionals, including doctors. We are also concerned that removing doctors completely from the team will inevitably mean more detainees are sent to Emergency Departments, with huge implications for police officers and custody staff.

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In a time of increasing litigation and scrutiny (both by professional bodies and the media) of police actions it seems perverse to us that MPS are removing a pool of highly experienced clinicians to support these vulnerable patients and protect both MPS and their detainees from harm.

We welcome your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P Marks'.

Prof Paul Marks
President-Elect, FFLM

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H Thornton'.

Dr Helena Thornton
Registrar, FFLM