

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
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Dear Home Secretary,

I write in response to the report on Hestia's super-complaint on the police response to victims of modern slavery, issued by HMICFRS, the College of Policing and the IOPC.

I acknowledge the recommendations made in this report and understand that recommendations 2, 3 and 4 are applicable to all Forces, including Essex Police, and that recommendations 4 and 6c are applicable to Police and Crime Commissioners. (Relevant recommendations are listed in appendix A for reference).

It is pleasing to see the recognition that '*forces have, overall, strengthened their approach to tackling modern slavery since the 2017 HMICFRS inspection*'; the introduction in 2019 of a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Team in Essex, with a strength of 15, demonstrates the commitment to this agenda in our county. I am also pleased to note recognition of the Victim Navigator role, which is something that we benefit from in Essex. The introduction of Protect and Prevent Officers, who work at a grassroots level to raise awareness and educate those who provide support, has proved to be a particular success. I receive monthly reporting on the number of modern slavery referrals to the NRM to ensure I am familiar with the volume and trends. I support the findings of the report and agree that potential exists for further improvements to be made.

The Chief Constable has provided a detailed response to me regarding each of the recommendations relevant to Essex Police. This assures me that Essex is responding positively and proactively to the recommendations made in the report.

With regard to recommendation 4, I continue to financially support the modern slavery and exploitation helpline run by Unseen(UK), noting that Essex has the eighth highest referral

numbers for both victims and cases per county. I provide funding to Justice and Care, who host a MSHT victim navigator, and also fund local groups who support this work – this increases the capacity of third sector organisations to operate in an independent environment, with the victims best interests at the heart of their work. In addition, the Force Growth Programme for 2021/22 includes resources for an additional four officers to work on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and Serious Organised Crime.

I am committed to monitoring future progress in this area and will work with the APCC to report on this progress to HMICFRS, as detailed in recommendation 6c.

We will use the observations and recommendations contained in this report to inform our future work in Essex.

I will continue to monitor the work of Essex Police in this regard, and to hold the Chief Constable to account, including through the monthly Performance and Resources Scrutiny Board.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger Hirst', written in a cursive style.

Roger Hirst  
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

c.c. Ben-Julian Harrington, Chief Constable, Essex Police.

## **Appendix A – Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 2: To chief constables**

Assure themselves that police officers and staff (including non-specialist staff, as appropriate) are supported through access to learning, specialist policing resources and victim support arrangements, so that officers and staff are able to:

- easily access information and advice on modern slavery and human trafficking through their force systems;
- identify possible victims of modern slavery;
- recognise that victims of modern slavery should not be treated as criminals in situations where they have been forced to commit an offence by their exploiters;
- know how to take immediate steps to make victims feel safe (including facilitating access to a place of safety, if necessary);
- understand how to advise victims what support is available to them;
- understand the National Referral Mechanism and duty to notify requirement, and know how to make good-quality referrals; and
- ensure that the statutory defence (provided by section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) for victims of slavery and exploitation who are compelled or coerced into committing offences by their exploiters is considered in all cases to protect victims from prosecution.

### **Recommendation 3: To chief constables**

Assure themselves that their resources are being deployed to enable effective investigation of modern slavery offences (which may, for example, involve taking account of high levels of vulnerability and organised crime group involvement). They should assure themselves that their crime allocation processes direct investigations to the most appropriately skilled individuals and teams.

### **Recommendation 4: To chief constables, and police and crime commissioners**

Work together to understand the support needs of victims of modern slavery crimes. They should provide appropriate support within their respective remits to augment the national provision so that victims feel safe and empowered to remain involved in any investigations. This should focus on what support should be available before and after National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referral as well as alternative provision available for those declining NRM referral.

### **Recommendation 6: Monitoring of recommendations**

- a. Home Office to provide a report to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary on progress in implementing its recommendations within six months of the date of publication of this report.*
- b. National Police Chiefs' Council to collate Chief Constables' progress in reviewing and where applicable implementing their recommendations and report these to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary within six months of the date of publication of this report.*
- c. Association of Police and Crime Commissioners to collate Police and Crime Commissioners' progress in reviewing and where applicable implementing their recommendations and report these to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary within six months of the date of publication of this report.*